

# FAITH VINDICATED

FROM

*Possibility of Falshood :*

O R,

The Immovable Firmness and Certainty  
of the Motives to Christian Faith,

Asserted,

Against that Tenet, which, denying *In-*  
*fallibility* of Authority, subverts  
Its Foundation, and renders  
It *Uncertain*.

[John Sergeant]

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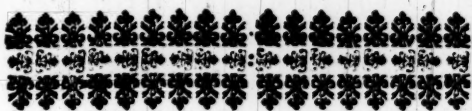
*Desistes adversus alios dicere ; caterùm ita pro Veritate lo-*  
*quêris, ut ea quæ dicuntur argui resellique non possint.*  
Dionys. Areopag. Epist. 6.

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LOVAIN, A. D. MDCLXVII.







## Introduction.

**T***Hough nothing be more natural than that all, who deny the Certainty of the Rule of Faith, should deny also the Certainty of Faith it self, since the Certainty of this later depends on the Certainty of the former; and, it is impossible the Conclusion should be held Certain, unless the Premisses be held so too, yet, the conceit which the Generality of those who call themselv's Faithful or Christian, have of their Faith, and, consequently, the nature of that kind of Assent, is such, that nothing can sound more horridly  
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*and blasphemously to their ears,  
~~then~~ bluntly and without disguise  
to say, That all their Faith may  
possibly be a Ly for any thing any  
man living absolutely knows.  
For, a certain goodness of Rational  
Nature, has fixt this apprehen-  
sion in them, that, since the World  
is made for the Salvation of Man-  
kind, it is unsuitable to the Wis-  
dom and Goodness of Providence,  
which has furnisht us with means  
of Certainty for our inferiour con-  
cerns, that the Principles on which  
Eternity depends, should fall short  
of that Certainty, and, consequently,  
of strength and efficacy to move &  
carry us on to a steady pursuit of  
that greatest, and, in comparison,  
only Interest. Notwithstanding,  
so irresistible is the force of this  
evident truth, that, whoever has de-  
serted the Catholick Church, and  
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*her Rule of Faith, Tradition, can have no absolute Certainty of Faith; that is, indeed no true Faith (for that truly is Faith which the Generality of those who use the Word mean by it) that the more intelligent amongst them, conscious of the manifest weakness of their Grounds, are necessitated, in their Controversies, when they should defend their Faith, in plain terms to disgrace and betray it; choosing rather candidly to confess it to be all a possible Falshood, than to undertake that impossible performance to maintain that it is an Absolute Truth.*

*I cannot resemble this Natural Conceit of the perfect Certainty of Faith, inbred as it were in the Generality of those who have had even a glimmering of Christianity, to any thing so well as to the*

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*apprehension, the former World had of a Godhead. For, as natural Instinct forc't those, who had not light to know the True God, to affix the Notion of a Deity to some false one, as some eminent Heroe, the Sun, Thunder, Fire; nay, there was nothing so ridiculous but they would make a God of it, rather than forgoe the tenet of a Sovereign Power so deeply rooted in them by Nature; so, our modern Misbelievers, rather than they will relinquish their Opinion, that Faith and the means to know the way to Heaven is absolutely-Certain, springing naturally from the conceit they have that God has a Providence for the Salvation of Mankind, chuse to misplace the notion of the Certain means to know God's will, or Rule of Faith, in  
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*the most unlikely things imaginable; as, in a ridiculous whimsy of Fancy little better than a Dream, nay sometimes in a dream it self, or in the motion of some hypocondriacal vapour, as do the Fanaticks; others, in other things seemingly wiser; as, in their opinions of some men they esteem Good and Learned; in meerly their being educated thus by Parents who confess they have relinquish'd what themselves had been educated to; in Interpretations of words by Grammatical skill which were writ long ago, and in dogmatical points, where every word is capable of equivocalness; nay (which is indeed as mad as the most extatick of them all) to affirm that such words are so plain to every Reader that none can miss the right sense of them:*  
*All*

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*All which, though plainly confuted by this Principle which Nature teaches the rudeſt, that, That can never be a way which many follow to their power and yet the greater part are miſled, joyn'd to their plain Experience that many followers of theſe wayes exceedingly differ; yet, ſo prevalent is the force of the other Truth, that they will wink at this later to embrace that; inſomuch that none of thoſe ( I except Seekers, by what name ſoever they are call'd, as not being pretenders to Faith ) but, were they ask'd whether they be not as Certain of their Faith as that they live, would readily and heartily answer affirmatively; I mean thoſe of every ſort who follow meerly the Guidance of uncorrupted nature in this affair.*

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Notwithstanding, as in the Pagan World There were found many Witty men, who, out of Unacquaintance with the True Godhead and the Unworthyness of the False Gods then in vogue, or out of a conceit of many misgovernments in the world, speculated themselves out of their natural notions and went about to deny absolutely there was any God at all; so it happens that, amongst those who have deserted the Catholick Church, there are found diverse men of speculative and searching brains; who, out of Unacquaintance with, or at least their sleightly penetrating the nature of the Catholick Rule of Faith, the Living Voice and Practice of the Church, or TRADITION, and, withal, seeing the Vanity and manifest Inability of their own pretended Rules

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*to ascertain them absolutely their Faith is True, joyn'd with the experienc't Disagreement in Faith amongst diverse Pretenders to it, would speculate themselves out of their Natural Christianity, and deny any Absolute Certainty at all of Faith, or the way to Salvation; contenting themselves with a Probability in the Grounds 'tis built on, miscall'd by them Moral Certainty; confessedly consistent with a Possibility of Falshood. Which kind of Grounds permits, that perhaps all may chance to be shewn to morrow a meer Illusion and a bold Lye; and all the Christian World hitherto to have been possibly led by the nose by a False Imposture; nay, to have held that Imposture Most Sacred, and preferr'd the adhering to it before all the Goods, Life or Nature could bestow.*

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*How near this wicked Tenet approaches to Atheism appears hence; that 'tis next to the Denial of a God-head, to deny that in proper speech we know Him, or the Way to Him; Yet this is the very Position of those who put a Possibility of Falshood in Faith; since none can truly be said to know that to be true; which he sees and acknowledges may not be true at the same time. This Seed of Infidelity sown when the Rule of Faith was renounc'd, first dar'd to appear publickly above Ground in the writings of Mr. Chillingworth and the L. Falkland; and, though, had it been propos'd barefact, in another occasion, it could have hop'd for no welcome Reception even amongst the Generality of the Protestants themselves, who were made believe ever since their*

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*Breaking from the Church, their Faith had the Word of God for its Basis, which they honestly understood to have the same Certainty as if God himself had spoke it; yet, being dress'd up by their plausible Rhetorick, and, advanc'd in a circumstance when they were confuting the Papists, the middle sort of Protestant Readers at unawares let it pass as meritorious to their party; and the wiser sort embrac'd it both as a real Truth, and also as making best for the Interest of their Cause when they would oppugn us; what disservice soever it did tot he Common Cause of Religion or Christianity. For, they were not at all solicitous (so strangely did faction transport them) so they could in their conceit overthrow the Infallibility of the Catholick Church, though they reduc'd*

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*duc'd all Faith into Incertainty,  
and all the Grounds on which  
'tis built, into a tottering Contin-  
gency.*

*It seem'd to threaten a Mis-  
chief considerable enough to Chri-  
stianity, that such a pernicious  
Tenet should be publickly own'd  
in Controversy, to taint the wiser  
sort of Readers with Atheism, in  
which it hath been too successful ;  
but, it grew intolerable when it  
durst take the boldness to appear  
in Sermons pronounc'd in very  
Honourable Assemblies, and af-  
terwards publish'd in Print ; where,  
under the Title of [ The Wisdom  
of being Religious ] and a great  
many seeming shows, and, I hearti-  
ly think, very real Intentions of  
impugning Atheism, by an ill-prin-  
cipated, and ( in that circumstance )  
imprudent and unnecessary confes-  
sion*

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*sion in equivalent Terms of the possible falshood of Faith, nay even as to the chiefest and most Fundamental point, the Tenet of a Deity. Religion receives a deep wound, and Atheism an especial Advantage: as may perhaps more particularly be shown hereafter. I envy not that Sermon, and some other Productions of Mr. Tillotson their Authour, their due commendations, though he be my Adversary; I acknowledge that in his clear Method, or disposition of his matter, and the cleanness of his style, which fit him for an Excellency in Preaching, he hath few Equals; and that, had he good Principles, he would deliver them as intelligibly as any man I know; onely I could wish he had right Principles to Ground his discourse, without which he can never make*

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*a Controvertist, but must needs undermine the solid Foundation of Christianity, if he undertake to meddle with the Grounds of it, even while he goes about to defend it.*

*What I am on this occasion chiefly to reflect on, is my own obligation; which is, the boldness of owning and publishing the Uncertainty of Christian Faith, being come to the height, to assert it's Absolute Firmness and Certainty in the best manner God shall enable me: and his Providence seems to require it of me at present; In regard 'tis expected I should reply to Mr. Tillotson's pretended Answer to Sure Footing; whose first Principle in that Reply seems to be this, that, what he deems the Rule of Christian Faith, and, consequently, that*  
Faith

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Faith it self is possible to be False; for, by virtue of this Position, which he defends p. 118, and in diverse other places implies and builds on, he more oppugns my discourse than by any other Thesis whatever. The contrary to which if I ewince, then the Protestants own confession, that they have no Absolutely-Certain Ground or Rule of Faith, confutes them without more ado, and concludes them to have relinquish'd its onely right, because its onely truly certain Rule, **TRADITION.**

Yet, were it not my chief design to establish the Absolute Truth of Christian Faith in it self, by all the Arguments I can imagin, and not meerly to confute Protestant Controwertists, I needed not take the pains thus to multiply Demonstrations, or even alledg so much as one. For, since, whatever they pretend seem-

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*Seemingly to Antiquity or Authority of Fathers by their voluminous quotations, yet they will finally and heartily stand to nothing in contests about Faith, as Conclusive, but their own Interpretations of Scripture; Which being so weak a Ground that every dayes Experience shows it's Failings; an ordinary Probability is abundantly enough to overthrow their Discourses, whose very Principle is not onely Improbable, but evidently a False one; Whence, the meanest Catholick writer cannot fail to have the advantage over their Best in a Prudential man's Esteem; because he cannot possibly miss of a Medium more probable than is their main Ground. I declare then that my Chief End in this Treatise is to settle Christian Faith, & to demonstrate that it must be truly or Absolutely*

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Certain ; and that my applying it now and then to my Opposers, is only a Secondary Intention, and merely Occasional.

Ere I fall close to my Proofs, that Faith cannot possibly be False, to avoid Equivocation in the words, I declare that by the word [Faith] I am not solicitous whether be meant our Act of Faith or the Points of Faith, that is, the Object of that Act ; but judg that distinction wholly Impertinent in this present discourse ; and, the reason is, because I cannot affirm a Point True or False, but as it stands under Motives able to make me judge, assent or beleieve 'tis such or such ; which Motives, if they be such as are able to convince that the Point cannot but be so, then my Judgment or Assent to those Points, thus concluded, that is my Act of Faith cannot but be True ; because



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*cause it depends intirely on Grounds Impossible to be False, viz. those Motives ; But, if those Motives are not of such a nature as is absolutely Conclusive the thing is, then both the Thing, Object, Point, or Proposition of Faith, as being onely Knowable by virtue of them, may be otherwise, and also my Act of Faith or Belief of those Points may be a wrong or erroneous Judgment; that is, both of them may be False. To ask then if Faith can possibly be False, is to ask whether the Motives laid by God's Providence for Mankind or his Church to embrace Christian Faith, must be such as of their own nature cannot fail to conclude those points True ; and, to affirm that Faith is not possible to be False, is equivalently to assert that those Motives or the Rule of Faith, must be thus absolutely*

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## Introduction.

*Conclusive, Firm, and Immovable.*

Hence is seen, that I concern not my self in this discourse with how perfectly or imperfectly diverse persons penetrate those motives; or how they satisfy or dissatisfy some particular Persons; since, I only speak of the Nature of those Motives in themselves, and as laid in Second Causes by Gods Providence to light Mankind in their way to Faith: to which the dimness of eye-sight, neglect to look at all, or looking the wrong way, even in many particular men, is Extrinsecal and Contingent.

Lastly, to avoid Mistake and Confusion, I declare, that there being two sorts of Questions, one concerning the Existence of a thing, call'd An est, viz. whether there be any Certainly-Conclusive Rule of Faith, or no; and the other about what

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what is the Certain or truly-Con-  
clusive Rule of Faith, call'd Quid  
est; I am not now discoursing about  
the later ( that was the work of  
**SURE FOOTING** ) but the for-  
mer onely. Indeed, in my first di-  
scourse there I endeavour'd to e-  
vince this Truth from par. 1. to par  
17. by diverse Arguments; but, be-  
cause Mr. T. waves the speaking to  
those Premises as they tend to infer  
my Conclusion, and onely discourses  
a little ( Mistakingly ) against the  
Conclusions themselves, therefore,  
being resolv'd to write a Treatise to  
establisb Christian Faith, I thought  
fit to apply it to his procedure  
there; that so I may both more forcibly  
invite him to that necessary though  
neglected Duty, and, withall that  
by settling the Existence & Nature  
of Faith and it's Rule first, I may  
clear the way methodically to di-  
scover

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*Discover what, and onely what, can be the right Rule of Faith. And, possibly in my next Treatise if Mr. T. and Mr. St. think fit to continue on this discourse forwards by answering this, they may, by denying that in true speech the Points of Faith are Truths, or Faith is True, oblige me to begin yet higher, and make use of such Mediums as are more direct and immediately fit to confute Atheism.*

*The understanding Reader will easily pardon the Speculativeness of this Treatise in great part of it: if he reflects that discourses built on Intrinsecal Mediums and manag'd in the way of Severe Reason, do naturally, nay must necessarily, bear up to the First Principles; yet, by the Harmony and Connexion of Truths with one*  
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another, there will be found also very many Proofs fairly Intelligible by the middle sort of Prudential men; especially in those Arguments which are drawn from Practice; and, if I flatter not myself, some Proofs, and those Convincing ones too, suitable to every Capacity. This comfort my Readers may expect to reap by this Procedure that it must forcibly shorten Disputes, and bring Controversies after a while to a period, unless our Adversaries be still obstinately bent to play the Drolls instead of soberly and pertinently disputing. For, hardly can Errour hide her deformity, when she is exposed naked to the view of Rational nature in the noon-day-light of FIRST-PRINCIPLES.

*Faith*

no further

of the same name

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# Faith Vindicated

FROM

## Possibility of Falshood.

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### *First Eviction.*

§ 1. **I** Lay for the *Basis* of my present Discourse these two Propositions.

1. *Christians are oblig'd to hold firmly, profess, and stand to it, even with Postulata. the loss of their Lives, that Points of Faith are TRUTHS.*
2. *None can be thus oblig'd to hold, profess, and maintain that to be TRUTH which they know not to be so.*

The later of these is as certain, as that God, the Imposer of this Obligation, is *Good*: For how unworthy his Infinite Goodness were it, to will that

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*rational Nature or Mankind should act* rationally by *holding firmly* what it has *no firm Grounds* to hold; that is, what it *knows not to be* so? Or to sacrifice its very *Being* to testify the truth of those Points, concerning which, if it work according to right reason, the nature God has given it, and deviate not from that by a weak credulity, it can never be perfectly satisfy'd that they are indeed Truths, which it can never be, if, notwithstanding all it knows, they yet may possibly be Falshoods. No man in true morality ought to say what he *knows not*, much less so asseverantly, as to seal it with his blood.

As for the former Proposition, which I account most fundamental to the ensuing Discourse, I am to declare that by *Holding, &c. a thing to be a Truth*, I understand the holding that the thing *absolutely, in reality, or indeed, is so as I judge*. Whence to this Holding a Thing to be Truth, 'tis not enough that a man hold it *is so to the best of his judgment*; but 'tis requir'd moreover, that he hold he is not deceiv'd in making such a judgment; and this, because he holds his Thought conformable to the Thing. For, this



this settles Verity or Truth on its proper and firm Foundation, *the thing*; and not on the unstable motions of his Judgment, as does the other. My first and chief *Postulatam* thus understood, I esteem to be self-evident to all that converse with Christianity taken in its largest sense, as I declar'd in my Introduction; setting aside that sort of Speculators; I mean those of our modern Adversaries, against whom I dispute at present; and of whom the Question is now agitated, whether they are indeed to be held right Christians or no. And I conceive that he who should deny it, must be bound to put the contradictory Position; and to affirm, that *Christians are not bound firmly to hold, profess, and maintain with the loss of their lives the Truth of their Faith*, but its *Likelihood* only.

He that affirms this, if he would be held a Christian, is to be confuted by the contrary sentiment of the generality of Christians, from whom he dissents in so Fundamental a Point as is the rightly understanding the nature of *Faith*, which they *profess*, and which it so highly imports them to *know*; that is, indeed, in

rightly understanding the meaning of the word *Faith*. If he be no Christian, yet hold the Godhead, 'tis to be demonstrated partly from the *proper effects* of Faith, and the nature of the great difficulties, both intellectual and moral, which 'tis ordain'd to master: partly out of the nature of God and his Attributes, obliging him to lay means proportion'd to an intended end; or to establish every thing according to the Concern that depends on it, which Concern in our case is the highest imaginable, to wit, *the Salvation of Mankind*, the End of creating those very Entities on which the Certitude of Science is built. Or, lastly, if he be an Atheist, the Deity and it's Attributes are first to be demonstrated: as also what is Man's *summum bonum*, and the immediate Disposition to it; and then the nature and Certitude of *Faith*, and consequently of it's *Rule* are to be demonstrated.

Supposing then my later *Postulatum* to be evident to all that know there is a wise and good Governour of the world, and who understand the common Principles of Morality; and my for-

former *Postulatum* to be clear and undeniable matter of Fact to those who converse with Christianity; and therefore to have unavoidable force upon all that would be held Professors thereof, I shall be bold to proceed upon them.

And, first, *Logick*, whose proper office 'tis to look into the nature and actions of our Soul as *Rational*; and as it were, to anatomize her Thoughts, takes up the discourse, and proceeds thus.

§ 2. *Truths* are found in *Propositions*; The The-  
sis demon-  
strated  
from the  
nature of  
Evidence. a Proposition consists of two Notions called *Subject*, and *Predicate*, and a third, whose office 'tis to connect them; whence to *know* a thing to be Truth or true, is to *see* the *Conn. xion* between the two Notions spoken of, or to see that the third truly connects them. Now there are but two ways imaginable (abstracting from Experience) how this may be *seen*: Either by seeing immediately that those two Notions are the same with one another out of the very Notions themselves; or else by seeing that they are *each* of them the same with a *Third*; whence follows, that, unless that Third Notion can fail to be the same with it self, those two Notions

which are the same with it, cannot possible fail to be the same with one another. The former is called *Self-Evidence*; this later, *Evidence by deduction*: Both are built immediately upon this grand Verity, that, *The same is the same with it self*; wherefore, unless it be seen that the Truth of that most Self-Evident Axiom is engag'd in their Patronage, they cannot be even known to be *True*; and, if it be *seen* that it is thus engag'd, they must needs be known *impossible to be false*; since 'tis most manifestly impossible, that First Principles should be false, or that *the same should not be the same with it self*. Wherefore, either Points of Faith need not be known to be *Truths*, or else they must (by Reflecters at least) be known *impossible to be false*.

From the  
nature of  
the Subject  
in Faith.  
Propositions.

§ 3. The same is evinc't from the nature of the Subject in those Propositions which affirm the Truth of any point of Faith: For, if we look narrowly, we shall find that the Subject in those is, either formally, or in effect, a Proposition it self; as when we say, *This Proposition [Christ is really in the Sacrament] is true*; *[That God is one and three] is true*, &c. Where the Subjects are manifestly these;  
*Christ*

Christ is really in the Sacrament; God is one and three, or, a Trinity is. A Proposition then being a Speech apt to express Truth or Falshood, may necessarily determin'd to do the one, (excepting those which speak of a future Contingent) it follows, that who ever is bound in reason to affirm that the Proposition expressing the point of Faith is True, is bound likewise to affirm 'tis impossible to be false, if taken in the same sense he means it; that is, indeed, if taken for the same Proposition, since 'tis impossible Truth should be Falshood. Either then Christ's followers are not oblig'd to affirm the Points they profess are true, which thwarts the Sentiments of the Christian part of mankind; or else, they must necessarily be oblig'd, with all, to affirm them impossible to be false.

§ 4. The same is concluded from the nature of the Copula, [is] whose office From the nature of the Copula being to connect or identify the notions of the Subject and Predicate, that is, to express that what is meant by those two notions is to be found in the same Thing, or that they have one common stock of Being, its proper signification is Being or Existence; not abso-

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lutely, as if it meant that either of the Terms exists in Things; but comparatively or conditionally as it were, that that Being which belongs to one of the Terms, is the same Being with that which belongs to the other; or that by the same Being whereby one of the Terms *is*, the other *is* also. Now then, this kind of Expression or Signification being such as has no latitude between it and its utmost Opposit or Contradictory, [*is not*] it being the most uncompounded notion that is, and not capable to be mingled with any alloy or participation of its Opposit, as it happens in *Contraries*: it follows that who holds the *Truth* of the Proposition, or, which is all one, the Identification of the two Terms exprest by the *Copula* [*is*] must hold it *absolutely*, and the Opposite to be *impossible to be false*; nothing being more impossible than that *is* and *is not* should both be true at once; or that the same thing should be the same and not the same in the same respect, that is, should *be true*, and *not be true*: And hence it is, that though distinctions use to fall upon the Equivocalness of the two Terms, yet no man that knows what Logick meant,

meant, ever distinguish the meer *Copula*, its simplest notion not admitting any possible division.

§ 5. Our Argument from the *Copula* is particularly strengthen'd from the nature of the *Predicate* in the Propositions we speak of; I mean in such Speeches as affirm such and such Points of Faith to be *True*. For *True* means *Existent*, in Propositions which express onely the *An est* of a thing, as most Points of Faith do; which speak abstractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the Subject it speaks of consists, or the *Quid est*. So that most of the Propositions Christians are bound to profess, are fully expressed thus; *A Trinity is Existent*, a *Christ God-and-man is Existent*, &c. and the like may be said of those Points which belong to a Thing or Action past; as, *Creation was*, *Christ's Crucifying was*, &c. For, *Existent* is the Predicate in these too, onely affixt to another difference of time; and 'tis equally impossible such Subjects should *neither have been nor not have been*, or *have been and have not been* at once, as it is that a thing should *neither be nor not be* at present, or both *be and not be* at present. Regarding then

From the nature of the *Predicate* in most of those Propositions,

then stedfastly the nature of our Predicate, [*Existent*] we shall find that it expresses the utmost Actuality of a Thing; and, as taken in the posture it bears in those Propositions, that Actuality *exercis'd*; that is, the utmost Actuality in its most actual state; that is, as absolutely excluding all manner or least degree of Potentiality, and consequently all Possibility of being otherwise; which is radically destroy'd when all Potentiality is taken away. This Discourse holding, which in right to Truth I shall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Opposer) to be more than Mathematically *demonstrative*, (as shall be shown more particularly hereafter) it follows inevitably, that who so is bound to profess a *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c. *is* or *was Existent*, is also bound to profess that 'tis impossible they should be *not-Existent*; or which is all one, that 'tis impossible these points of Faith should be false.

From the nature of *Distinction*, as apply'd to the Predicate,

§ 6. The same appears out of the nature of *distinction* or *division* apply'd to our Predicate *Existent*, as found in these Propositions: For, could that Predicate bear a pertinent distinction, expressing this and the other respect, or *thus* and *thus*,



## Faith vindicated.

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*thus*, it might possibly be according to one of those respects, or *thus consider'd*, and *not be* according to another, that is, *another way consider'd*: But this evasion is here impossible; for, either those distinguishing Notions must be more Potential or antecedent to the Notion of *Existent*, and then they neither reach *Existent*, nor supervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which Differences ought to do; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Substance* or *Being*, than *Existent* is; and, so, fit to distinguish it in that line; nor, lastly, can any determination in the line of *Accidents* serve the turn; for, these suppose *Existence* already put, and so the whole Truth of the Proposition entire and compleat antecedently to them: 'Tis impossible therefore that what is thus affirm'd to be *True*, should in *any regard* be affirm'd *possible to be false*; the impossibility of distinguishing the Predicate pertinently, excluding here all possibility of divers respects.

§ 7. The same is demonstrated from the impossibility of distinguishing the Subjects of those Faith-Propositions; for those Subjects being Propositions

From the impossibility of distinguishing the subjects of Faith-propositions.

themselves, (as was shown § 3.) and accepted for *Truths*, as is suppos'd, they are incapable of Distinction, as shall be particularly shown hereafter, (Eviēt. 3. § 5.) Besides those Subjects being Points of Faith, and, so, standing in the Abstract, that is, not descending to subsuming respects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent distinguishableness.

From the nature of *Truth*, consisting in an Indivisible. § 8. The same is demonstrated from the nature of *Truth*, which consists in an Indivisible: Whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great soever the conceived approaches towards it be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwise, be utterly excluded by the Actuality of *Is* or Existence: which put or discover'd, the Light of *Truth* breaks forth, and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees*, vanish and disappear.

From the nature of *Connexion*. § 9. The same is demonstrated out of the nature of *Connexion* found in the aforesaid Propositions. For, 'tis evident their Truth consists in the connexion of those Notions which make the Subject and Predicate. Whoever therefore sees not the Connexion between those Notions in the Principle of Faith, sees

sees not the truth of any of those Propositions; that is, those Propositions are not to such a man *True*. Wherefore, Connexion excluding formally Inconnexion, so that 'tis clearly impossible they should be found together in the self-same Subjects, and the falshood of such Propositions consisting in the Unconnectedness of their Terms, it follows that he who is oblig'd to profess those Faith-Propositions *True*, must see the Connexion between their *Terms*, and consequently that they *cannot possibly* be inconnected or *false*. Again, since all approaches or vicinity to Connexion, by how near degrees soever they are made, are *not* Connexion, it follows that all Connexion consists in an Indivisible, and can admit no Latitude for a *Possibility to be otherwise*, to be grounded on. Lastly, all Connexion being necessarily Immediate, or seen by virtue of Immediateness, and to see Immediate Connexion being the Producer of *Certain Knowledge*, or of Assurance the Thing *cannot but be so*; it follows, that to see the Truth of such Propositions, or, which is all one, the Immediate Connexion of their Terms, is to see they

can-

cannot but be so, or that they are absolutely void of all Possibility of Falshood.

From the  
nature of  
*Opinion.*

§. 10. By this time we are brought orderly to look into the nature of *Opinion*. Which word I take not here in a large sense for any kind of Assent, however product; but for an Assent or Adhesion to a Tenet without sufficient Grounds to evince the Thing is so as the Opiner judges; as it is taken in that Proverb, *Turpe est opinari*. Now, 'tis most evident, that there would be sufficient Grounds to convince, in case, the Term or Point were seen to be deduc'd by immediate steps, or a Train of immediate Connexions to that very Conclusion. 'Tis manifest then, that 'tis therefore *Opinion*, and blame-worthy, because its Grounds, as they are laid in the understanding of the Assenter, want or fall short of this immediate Connexion; So that *Opinion* is a judgment upon remote or unimmediate Considerations. By which means it comes to pass, that the most necessary verity of that Grand Principle, [*The same is the same with it self*] upon which all Certainty both of first Principles and of *Deduction* is built, and whose perfect Self-Evidence and Inter-

## Faith vindicated.

25

Interestedness in whatever belongs to right discourse, seem to make the very Light of Reason consist originally in It, is not engag'd in the *Opiners* discourse; whence, wanting Immediateness, it becomes unconnected, incoherent, weak, and slack, or rather indeed *null*. No wonder then if all Opinion, how near soever it approaches seemingly to Immediate Connexion, and how strongly soever it be supported by an experienc'd seldomness of such Effects, or the conceiv'd unaptness and fewness of Causes fit to produce them, yet it admits *Possibility of being otherwise*; in regard it fails in its very Root and *Basis*, by not relying on the main Principle and Foundation of all steadiness in humane Discourse, and which is of so necessary a Truth, that 'tis impossible to falter or give way, to uphold and exempt it from a liability to disconnexion of those Notions which it pretended, and ought to Identify; that is, from a liability to Error.

§ 11. From this declaration of the nature of *Opinion*, it is render'd manifest out of what Fountain-head all Rational Assents flow; namely, from seeing the Imme-

Immediate Connexion of one Term with another; or, which is all one, that this Principle [*The same is the same with it self*] stands engag'd for their verity: Also, that the Light of Reason consists *fundamentally* in this; and *formally* in deriving the *perfect Visibleness* of this to make other Propositions also *visible* to the Eye of our Understanding. Likewise, that Assents not springing from this Light of Reason, must be, as such, *Irrational*; and arise necessarily from the *will*, taken as not following the Light of Understanding, but as prompted and put forward by some passion, *viz.* some irrational desire or inclination the thing should be so, which prest and precipitated the understanding into Assent before due motives forc't it. As likewise, that since none can be bound *constantly* to *profess* what he cannot *steadily* see to be true, a Christian who is thus bound to *profess* his *Faith True*, must see that the First Principle now spoken of, which gives all *Steadiness* to our Intellectual Sight, is interess'd in the patronage of the Proposition he assents to: Whence, true Faith, by reason of its Immoveable Grounds, can bear an asserting the  
absolute

absolute Impossibility of its being False; whereas, who ever affirms *Faith may possibly be false*, makes it built upon remote *mediums*, that is, such as are either not immediate; or (which is all one) not seen to be immediate to the two Terms of the Proposition assented to; and, so, they become destitute of the Invincible strength of that first Principle which establishes all deduc'd Truths, and legitimates all Assents to them. Whence follows inevitably, that he turns all Faith into Opinion; makes Faith absurd, preternatural and irrational; importing that 'tis a thing which men *must* assent to or say interiorly 'tis so, and yet see no *solid* Grounds *why it must be so*; profess stoutly 'tis true, and that they are *sure* of it; and yet, if they will speak truly, profess with all, that *it may be false*, and that the whole world may be mistaken in it; and lastly, he leaves all Christs Doctrine Indefensible, and utterly unmaintainable to have, absolutely speaking, either any solidity or steadiness in its Grounds, or one true word in it self.

## Second Eviction.

The Ori-  
gin and  
Natures  
of Sus-  
pence and  
Assent,

**S. 1.** FROM this not-seeing the Con-  
nexion of the two Terms in  
the Conclusion by a *Medium* immedi-  
ately connected to them both, but by di-  
stant Glances onely, which have not the  
power to make one *see Intellectually* the  
Thing *is*, or *Assent*; joyn'd with this  
that, notwithstanding, 'tis not seen those  
Terms are Opposit or *Inconceivable*; the  
Soul becomes hereupon, as it were, in-  
vironed with a kind of Intellectual Dark-  
ness, and sees not which way to step for-  
wards, without danger of harming her  
Cognoscitive or Truth-affecting Nature  
by *Erreur*. Whence, she remains in a kind  
of Neutral Condition, which we call *Suf-  
pence*. But, 'tis to be well noted, that  
this Suspensive Condition of the Soul,  
not being a state of Actuality or Deter-  
mination, (much less of utmost Actua-  
lity, as is the seeing, by virtue of that  
main Principle before-nam'd, that a  
thing *is*) but of Indetermination, Po-  
tentiality, and Confusedness; its Na-  
ture admits consequently infinite de-  
grees,



grees, according as the Appearances which incline her towards Assent or Dissent are greater or less. Moreover, as in the passing from Indetermination to Determination (for example) in a motion to a *Terminus* of Rest, there are diverse approaches of that Motions Quantity so very near the *Terminus* or End, that their distance is undiscernable to a vulgar eye, and needs exact skill to distinguish them: So it happens here, that there must necessarily be found divers Inclinations or Approaches towards Assent, which have so small a degree of *Suspence* in them, that they are hard to be distinguished from absolute Assents, but by a learned Reflector; and the way he takes to distinguish them must be to observe whether the Understanding, acting reflectingly, that is, looking into the Nature of its own Act, finds there that it absolutely yields it self over to judge the thing *is existent* or *true*, or whether it onely judges it *very probable* or *Truth-likely*. For, any Assent to the *greatest Likelihood* of a thing is as far from being an Assent to the things *Existence*, as the Notion of *Existent* or *True* is from the Notion of *very likely to be true*. And

if the Assent to the former be not *actually* an Assent to the later, yet tend towards it, as it does; then 'tis *Potential* in respect of it, and so includes some degree of *Suspence*; which defect only can in our present case, hinder the other from being *actually* it, according to our former Discourse. *Assent*, then, to the *meer Likelihood* of a thing, is, or at least implies, *Suspence* of its *Existence*

§ 7. Another thing which inclines men to confound the Assent to the *Likelihood* of a thing, with the Assent to its *Existence* or *Truth*, is *Habituation* or *Custom*. For, men being us'd to proceed naturally to outward Action upon a very high Probability, without more ado or examination, they are hence apt to apprehend that a Conceit, which had so little and so undiscernable a proportion of *Suspence* in it, was a *perfect Assent*: and that, because the Soul quite yielded to the Motive as to *Exterior Action*, therefore it yielded likewise as to *Interior Assent*. Whereas, by reflecting on the Nature of this Act in the Soul, and by retriving its Grounds, we come to discover that, however the Soul runs promptly and rationally to Outward

ward Action upon such a Motive, when she is concern'd to act, even after deliberation: yet, not so to Interiour Assent, if she acts rationally; but, upon reflexion, finding in her self nothing to fix in her the Existence of the thing, or elevate it beyond the possibility of *not-being* or being False, she hangs back from assenting the thing *is*, and is constrain'd to say interiourly, or acknowledg in her own breast, she may possibly be mistaken, and the thing possibly be *not-Existent*, for ought she sees; which restrains her from truly assenting that the thing *is*.

§ 3. An Instance will render our Discourse clearer. 'Tis propos'd then (for example) to our Judging Power, whether *America be* or *no*? And we'll suppose (to avoid a disputed case) the Evidence of Authority has convinc'd the Understanding it once *was*, by the Impossibility the several Attesters should either be deceiv'd in a plain Object of Eye-sight, or have a common Motive able to make them conspire to bely their Eyes. But, the Question is, whether it *be now* or *no*. And, the uncouthness and unlikelihood that so vaste a place should

be destroy'd, joyn'd with the Customariness of acting upon a very great probability, makes him who is to act in order to it, (for example, send a ship thither) proceed to his intended outward action fearlessly, and esteem him *mad* who desists upon a conceit of so unlikely a failure. For, since all Action is in particulars, and Particulars are the very Sphear of Contingency, it follows, that we must not act at all, if we expected Demonstrations of the several Objects and Adjuncts of our outward Action: Whence he deserves justly to be accounted frantick who should desist from Action where there is so high a Probability; for this extravagant cautiousness were in effect to take away the Motives to any Exterieur Action in the world, and consequently all such Action it self. But now, let two Speculators or Scholars meet together, who consider not the *Practicableness*, but merely the *Truth* of things; and aim not to better their Purse by Merchandizing or outward Endeavours, but their Understandings by rightly-made Judgments or *Assents*, that is, by *Knowledges*: and we shall see their working on the Point

turns

turns upon other hinges. In the other, there was *Necessity of acting*, without which the world could not subsist: but, here's *no necessity of Assenting*, which we suppose onely aim'd at, at present; nor can there be any, unless that Principle or Cause of all Assent [*The same is the same with it self*] comes to exercise its over-powering Virtue upon the Soul. *There*, it was enough that *prudential* considerations discover'd a *betterness* to act exteriorly, all things weigh'd; to which needed not a severity of Principles forcing the *Truth* of the thing: but *here*, those Principles, which are the Maxims of Metaphysicks or Supreme Wisdom, are the only things to be consulted; and the prudential weighing of Particulars avails little or nothing towards the secure establishment of the *Truth* aim'd at. *There*, some harm was likely to ensue, if they acted not *exteriorly*, and went not about their work: but, *here*, no harm at all could come by not acting *interiorly*; I mean, by *not-Assenting*, but *Suspending* till the beams of Truth, by the Fountain-light of that First Principle, clear'd their Understandings: rather on the contrary, a great

harm was certain to ensue upon assenting in that case, that is, an Injury to Reason, their true Nature; by *concluding*, without seeing a middle Term connecting the two Extreams, on which every act of right Reason is built. These Scholars then, or Pursuers of Truth, consult with Speculative, not Practical Principles, to guide their Assents by. They are certain that such an *Effect* (as is the destruction of *America*) cannot be without a Cause; and Experience tells them such Causes seldom or never happen: Yet, knowing that all material things have Contingency annexed to their Natures, and not discovering any evident Principle in Nature hindering the vast Oceans on either side *America* to overswell the Continent, and so destroy it; they are forc'd to confess interiorly *America* may, for any thing they know, *possibly not be*; whence they are forc'd to *suspend*, as to its *Existence*, and only *Assent* to it's extream *Likelihood* of existing.

The Point  
evinced  
from the  
natures of  
*Suspence*  
and *Assent*

§ 4. The use I make of this discourse at present is this: that, though *Likelihoods* have a great latitude; yet *Assent*, (being the *terminus* of those Inclinations

tions towards it, which gradually exceed one another) consists in an Indivisible, as does the notion of *is*, on which (either *seen*, or *deem'd to be seen*) 'tis built, and to which it goes parallel. That, all Acts falling short of Assent to the *Existence* of a thing advance no farther than great Assents to it's *Likelihood*, and fall under the head of *suspensive Acts*; as to that things *Existence*, as the Soul will discover upon reflexion: and that, when we mistake one for the other, 'tis for not distinguishing well the great resemblance between assenting as to outward Action, and as to the speculative Truth; as also between assenting to the *extream Likelihood* of a thing, and assenting to its *Existence*. That, whensoever we see the *Possibility of a things being False or not-Existent* (which in our case is all one) we cannot have an Assent to it's *Existence*, but to the *likelihood* of it only, and *suspend* as to its *Existence or actual being*: and that, therefore, they who acknowledg that, notwithstanding all the Means used and all the Grounds it has, Faith may *possibly be false* to us, cannot be held to *assent* to the *Existence*

once of *Truth* of those points; but to suspend concerning their *truth*, and to assent only to their *likelihood to be true*. Which, whether it be a sufficient disposition to denominate such persons *Christians*, will easily and best be determin'd by the vulgar of Christianity, who possess the genuin and natural meaning of the word *Faith*, untainted with the frantick conceits sprung from such speculations as are taken out of Fancy; not, as they ought, from the nature of the Thing.

From the  
nature of  
*Holding*.

§ 5. The same Argument may be made from the nature of firmly *Holding*, as was from *Assent*; and the self-same discourse, *mutatis mutandis*: since 'tis most Evident, none can firmly hold a thing to be *true*, which he sees and acknowledges, that is, *holds* may be *False*; however he may hold it *Very likely to be True*.

From the  
nature of  
*Knowing*.

§ 6. The same is evinc'd from the notion of *knowing*: which word I take here abstractedly, unconcern'd what kind of knowledge it be; provided it be *True* and proper knowledge, and not abusively so call'd. For, since nothing can be *known to be* but what *is*, nor  
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known to be *such* but what is *such*: again since Christians, if they have either Honesty or Wis in them, must, some way or other, *know* points of Faith to be true, whose truth they esteem themselves bound to profess and stand to even with the loss of their lives; it follows, those points must be what they are *known to be*, that is *True*; and consequently (unless *knowledge* can be Ignorance.) *impossible not to be or to be False.*

§ 7. What hath been said of *Assent* and *Holding* and *Knowing* may also be discours'd from the notion of *Certainty*: for this has the same nature with the former, as it is a determination of the Understanding; I mean, *Intellectual determination* is the common *Genus* to them all: and they differ only in this, that *Knowledge* and *Certainty* are proper Effects of *Evidence*, whether sprung from the *thing* or from the *Attester*, nor can they be where there is wanting the Intellectual Light issuing from that First Principle of all Evidence so oft spoken of; whereas *Holding* or *Assenting* can proceed from the Blindness of Passion, or from Ignorance, as well as from the clear Sight of the Understanding. Now that  
the

From the  
nature of  
*Certainty*,  
in many  
regards.

the Nature of Certainty consists in an *Intellectual Determination* thus originiz'd, and consequently, when put, excludes all possibility of being otherwise (which is the point I aim to evince) appears, partly from the Etymology, and most evidently from the Use of the Word. For, *Certus* signifies *Determinate*. As then, when the matter spoken of restrains that word to *Volition*, it signifies an *Absolute Determination of will* or *Resolution*; as, *certus cunctis*; so, when we are speaking of the Ground of *Intellectual Certainty*, and say *the thing is Certain*, we intend to express full as much as when we say, *the thing is*; which speaks *Ultimate Determination* and *Actuality* in the Object, consider'd in it self: and, in like Manner, when the same word is intended to signify *Formal Certainty* in Us, or that Disposition of the Understanding whereby it is said to be *Certain*, it must necessarily signify (unless, contrary to the nature of Words it's most formal Notion be less rigorous than those which are less formal) a *Determinate* state of the Understanding, or an *Intellectual Determination*. Whence, as a thing

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thing is then *Certain* or *Determinate* when it *is*; so the *Understanding* is then *Determin'd* according to it's *Nature*; or *Certain*, when the *Thing* is *seen to be* as it is, which immediate *Effect* of the other is impossible, but by virtue of the first Principle of *Evidence* making that clear discovery; and, This engaged, all *Intellectual Potentiality*, or *Possibility of not being seen to be*, is totally and formally, that is, most absolutely excluded. The true and genuine *Notion*, then, of *Certainty* imports an absolute impossibility that that judgment which so fixes and determines the *Understanding* should be an *Errour*, or *False*: Since nothing can be *seen to be*, but what really *is*.

§ 8. Again, since *Determination* in any kind, is the *Terminus* of all *Indetermination* in the same kind, and so, beyond it: it follows, that *Certainty* or *Intellectual Determination*, is plac'd beyond all possible degrees of *Indetermination* of the mind, or *Uncertainty*. *Certainty*, therefore, is not attain'd till all possible degrees of *Uncertainty*, and, consequently, *Possibility of Falshood to us*, or *Errour*, be transcended and overcome.

Faith

*Faith*, then, must be deny'd to be *Certain*, if it be put *Possible to be False*.

§9. And, as my former Discourse has endeavour'd to display the Nature of *Certainty* from its *Genus* and *Difference*, which compound it's Definition; so the same will be still more satisfactorily evinc'd from observing the Language of Mankind; when they use the word *Certain*. For, that being most evidently the signification of a word which the intelligent Users of that word intend to express by it: if by divers sayings of theirs we can manifest that they meant to signify *such* a Conception by that Word, *that* will infallibly be the true meaning of it, and that Conception will have in it the true Nature of *Certainty*. Let us observe then attentively what is at the bottom of their hearts, when they use these and the like familiar Discourses, which naturally break from them. How frequent is it, when any one asks another, *Is such a thing true?* and the other replies, *I verily think it is*; he returns upon him with this pressing demand; *I, but are you certain of it? may not you be mistaken?* Which clearly intimates that that Disposition call'd *Certainty*,

## Faith vindicated.

7

*certainty*, is beyond all Inclinations, Motions, or indeterminate Tendencies of the Understanding, making it *verily think 'tis true*, which speaks the next remove, as it were, from a certain Assent; and, consequently, that 'tis an absolute determination and fixure of the Soul that *'tis true*: As also, that *Certainty* elevates the Soul beyond hazard of *mistake*. Again, many times, when one is sharply questioned, if he be *Certain of nothing* & nor daring, upon better reflection, pretend to *Certainty*, he replies warily (in a moderate word which diminishes and falls short of the other) that he is *Morally certain* of it; which evidences that the Notion of *Certainty* is in point of fixing or determining the Understanding, beyond that counterfeit *Certainty*, call'd *Moral Certainty*: Wherefore, since all *Moral Certainty* (as they call it) how great soever, though it be penetrated perfectly according as 'tis in its own Nature, is seen to consist with a *Possibility to be otherwise*; *True Certainty*, which exceeds it, must needs include an *Impossibility to be otherwise*: Faith, then, is not, in true speech, *Certain*, unless it be *impossible to be False*.

§ 10. Again,

§ 10. Again, let an Overweener, after his mistake becomes Visible, be challeng'd with it; we find that, in common speech, we use these or the like words, *You said, or thought, You were Certain of it, but You see You are mistaken*, Is it not Evident that the word *Certain* excludes a possibility of being otherwise: since his being *Certain* of it formerly is deny'd purely upon this score, because he was mistaken: which shews that the true notion of *Certain* is inconsistent with *mistake*; that is, that *Certainty* implyes Unmistakableness or, which is all one, Inerrability *hic & nunc* in the present affair. Whereas, had the notion of *Certainty* admitted a *Possibility not to be* as he judg'd, he had not been so mistaken in judging that *Certain* which by actually happening not to be was shewn afterwards *Possible not to be*. To think to evade, by alledging that it was not meant his mistake consisted in judging that *Certain* or *Impossible not to be*, which was *Possible not to be*, but in judging that *would be*, which afterwards *hap'd not to be*, is merely Childishness and Folly amongst Men, who hold that things are carry'd on by the course of

of Cause and Effect; and that things therefore happen because a Cause puts them, or not happen because no Cause puts them. To judg, then, a thing *would not be* is the same, amongst Intelligent Men, as to judg there would be *no Cause* to make it be; and, if there would be none such, 'tis most evident it *could not be*, or was *Impossible to be* in this order of the world. Such answers are fit for men who are led more by Sounds than Sense, and who think a different word will gain them an Escape, though that word signifies the same thing as the former.

11. The same will appear from the Absurdity, which palpably discovers it self in any Expression that modifies the true Notion of *Certain* with a Contingency: as if one should say, 'tis *Certain peradventure*, or 'tis *fallibly Certain*: The Nonsense of which shews that the true Notion of *Certainty* implies an Oppositeness to all Contingency, or an Impossibility to be otherwise. You'll ask, what then must be said of the Phrase, [*Moral Certainty*] where *Certainty* seems to admit an allay of Contingency? I answer, 'tis evident even hence and from

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all

all my former Discourse, that the word *Certainty* is there us'd *Catachrestically* or abusively, for some great *Likelihood*, and its *Epithet* means such a degree of it as is found generally in humane exterior actions which depend on *Free-will*, and are contingent as being Particulars; and speaks not proper *Certainty*, as 'tis meant to signify that perfect Intellectual Determination, whose Principles and Causes being high Truths, are unalterable. Whence, *Moral Certainty*, how high soever it be exalted and triumph in an empty name, is in reality *Uncertainty*; and the highest degree of *Moral Certainty* is the lowest degree of *Uncertainty*, truly so call'd; that is, of that which expresses an Intellectual Indetermination.

§ 12. Thus much from the use of the word; which, when it falls naturally and unaffectedly from the tongue of the Speakers, is a proper Effect of the Notion or meaning in their Souls, that is, of the Signification of that word; whence 'tis an apt *Medium* to demonstrate that Notion, its proper Cause, *à posteriori*.

§ 13. From this Discourse follows,  
first,



first, that, since, speaking of the *present*, (and the same, in proportion, holds of other differences of time) 'tis the same to say, *The thing is certain*, as to say *the thing is*; and to say *the thing is* speaks Indivisibility; the Notion of *Certainty* too consists in an Indivisible. By which is not meant that one *Certainty* may not be greater than another, both from a greater Perfection in the Subject, and a greater certifying Power in the Object: but, that *Certainty*, in the way of being generated in the Soul, is either there all at once or not at all; in the same sort as there is no middle between *is* and *is not*, (or *half-beings* of them) which are the formal Expressers of *Certainty*. Whence, again, appears that what we abusively call *Moral Certainty*, is indeed none at all; because it reaches not that Indivisible or Determinative Point in which True *Certainty* consists.

§ 14. Secondly, since true *Certainty* is caus'd in us by seeing the thing *is*; and this cannot be seen but by virtue of Principles; (especially that chief one, *A thing is the same with its self*) which Principles being *Truths*, cannot possibly be False: it follows both that what is Cer-

From the  
Impossibi-  
lity that  
what may  
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rain cannot possibly be False, and that what can possibly be False subsists upon no Principles. Whence, all *Moral Certainty*, as they call it, as also all high Probabilities, which confessedly *may possibly be false*, are convinc'd to subsist upon no Principles: and they, who acknowledg they have but *Moral Certainty* and *high Probabilities* for their Faith or Opinion, confess they have no Principles, which in true Language deserve that name, to ground them; but, at best, certain *likely Topical Mediums* that oft prove true, or hold for the most part: which may serve for a talking kind of Discourse, or Extremous Action; but are flat things and useless when *Truth* is to be concluded.

\* From the Identity of Certainty with Infallibility.

§ 15. Thirdly, it follows that true Certainty of any thing is the self-same with Infallibility or Inerrability, as to the same thing. For, *Certainty* is not had, till it be *seen*, that that First Principle, [*A thing is the same with it self*] is engag'd for the identification of the two Notions which make up the Proposition we are *Certain* of; that is, for the Truth of that Proposition: Wherefore, since we can have *Infallible Assurance* of the Truth

Truth of that First Principle; as also of this, that nothing can be *seen to be*, unless it *be*; we can frame an Inerrable Judgment that, when we *see* that First Principle engag'd for the Identity of those two Notions, 'tis engag'd for it, and so they identify'd; that is, we must know Infallibly that that Proposition is true. This I say in case it be a True Certainty, and not an only deem'd or mistaken one: yet even then there is a deem'd Infallibility, and the person that mistakenly judges himself certain of a thing, judges withall that he cannot be mistaken, *hic & nunc*, in that particular, which manifests that the Notion of Certainty is the same with that of Infallibility, however it may be misapply'd. Again, since the natural use of words gives it not to be nonsense to say, [I am *Infallibly Certain* of such a thing] 'tis plain that the Notion of *Infallibly* is not disparate from the Notion of *Certain*, or incompetent to it: it must then be either Tautological, or else be a different yet applicable Notion, and so apt to difference or distinguish it; but it cannot be this later, for then the Notion of *Certain* ought in all Reason and Logick ad-

mit with equal sense the opposit difference [*Fallibly*] which we experience it does not; nothing being more absurd and foolish than to say, [I am *fallibly* certain of a thing] 'Tis clear then that *Infallibly* is not fit to difference the Notion of *Certain*, or not a different Notion from it; but the same sense reiterated in another word for aggravations sake, as when we say, *I saw it with mine own eyes*; or such like; that is, if we consider it calmly, we shall find that that malignant word *Infallibility* which so bewonders our Opposers, amounts to no more but true *Certainty*, and has the self-same Notion with it.

From the  
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and Con-  
tingency.

§ 16. Fourthly, it appears that, seeing what *may be otherwise*, how *unlikely* soever, needs but a lucky chance to *be so*; they who say Faith may possibly be False, instead of *establishing* it, subject it to *Chance* and Contingency; and confess it has no Grounds so to secure it but a greater Wit than has been formerly, may possibly *shew* it to be False; that is, may subvert all the Grounds it now stands on. So that these men are convinc'd not to *settle* Faith upon any *firm Grounds*, or on the Nature of the thing: but

but to hang it on *Humane wit*, that is, on the Wit of the present Christians maintaining its Plausibility ; and, possibly, on the fortunate want of an acuter Wit than any now extant ; who, when he shall arise, may perhaps outwit them, and shew all their Faith to be a ridiculous foolery.

§ 17. Lastly, speaking of Truths, 'tis perfect Nonsense to say they can possibly be False ; since 'tis a direct contradiction Truth should be Falshood ; as is evident in Predications of past or future things, *viz.* in these, *Christ has dy'd, the Resurrection will be* : the former of which, if once True, *has been*, and so cannot have *not been*, the Circumstance of Time being gone in which only it could *not have been* ; and the later, if once put to be true, that is, to stand under certain or unimpedible Causes, is Impossible to be False, or not to succeed. So that 'tis the greatest madness and folly in the world to put either of these *possible to be False*. if they be once rightly judg'd Truths: and indeed I fear rather that they who judg the later *possible not to be*, subject them to impedible Causes ; and so make them, or at least their Grounds as to our know-

From the  
Incompof-  
ibility of  
Truth  
with Falfe-  
hood.

ledg, Future Contingents, which have neither determinate Truth nor Falshood. Speaking then of those Propositions or Points of Faith which predicate *de presenti*, it will be found by the Considerer, that they are all in a matter which is *unalterable*, and above Contingency; and, in case this were not, their very Determination to the present frees them from being other than they are for the present: Every thing *while it is* being necessarily *what it is*. There is no shadow, therefore, of Ground, for a man, who affirms Points of Faith to be Truths, to affirm withall they may *possibly be False*. All I can imagine in their behalf, to excuse them from speaking palpable Contradictions, is this; that perhaps they may mean our Discourse, while *in viâ* to find out these Truths, was impeditable, and so there was *then* a possibility they might not become *seen to be True*, that is, might be *no Truths to us*. But, the Question returns, Whether, in the *end* of our weighing their Motives, we discover them to be Truths or no? If not, why do we so asseverantly affirm they are? and why are we bound by Religion to profess them to be so? or, if we come to discover

cover they are *Truths*, how are we so stupid as not to discover withall, that they cannot possibly be Falshoods?

§ 18. My last Argument from Logic shall be this, that there is no way left to prove Faith, or perswade it to another that acts according to perfect Reason, in case *it*, that is, its Grounds as to our knowledg, can possibly be False. And, that this is so, is not so much evident from any particular Consideration in Logic, as from the whole Nature of Artificial Discourse, or *Disputation*. For, in case the Premisses be but *Morally Certain*, (as they call it) or *possible to be false*, that is, if the two Terms be not seen to be connected, these Propositions *may*, nay *ought* to be *deny'd* by the Respondent; whose Office and Right it is to grant nothing but what is *Evident*, lest he ensnare himself; but to put the Arguer to prove them. What then must the Opponent or Arguer do? Must he bring a Syllogism consisting of Premisses, only *morally Certain* or *possible to be false*, to make the other good? What will it avail? since these Premisses are also deniable for the same reason, and so *in infinitum*; that is, nothing at all can possibly

From the nature of *Disputation*, and the impossibility of otherwise to evince the Truth of faith.

bly be concluded finally, till Grounds *impossible to be false* be produced; which put, the Conclusion may be such also. Wherefore, unless Faith have Grounds *impossible to be False*, (and, consequently, able to shew It such also) none can *Rationem reddere Fidei*, give a true Reason of their Faith; but such an one at best as, in due right of Dispute, is undeniable at pleasure: Whence Faith is rendred both unmaintainable or indefensible in it self, and unperswadable to others that guide themselves by perfect Reason. For, however all who discourse of Religion, when they would convert any to Faith, use not to pin their Motives to Syllogistical Form: Yet, since no Reason in the case of convincing the Understanding, is allowable, but what will bear the test of true Logick; and this assures us there's no *concluding* any thing at all, without relying finally on Premisses or Grounds *impossible to be False*: it follows that, how finely and quaintly soever these men talk, unless they produce such Grounds, they can *conclude* nothing at all; and all their importunate Perswasions, which are not reducible to these Grounds, (nay, are made use of by  
Per-



Persons who declare against having any such Grounds for Faith) signifie just as much as if they should say, *I beseech you, Sir, be so good natur'd as to believe me; though to tell you true, I acknowledg sincerely neither can I bring, nor can there possibly be brought any Ground able to make good what I say, or any undeniable Premisses to force my Conclusion.*

### Third Eviction.

§ 1. **T**HUS far Logick : Let's see next what Nature and Metaphysics say to the Point, in which Quest yet we must not leave Logick's Assistance. And, first, these Sciences assure us, that as all Capacity of different Beings springs from First Matter, so all Capacity of contrary Determinations arises from what we call Potentiality or Indifferency in the Subject. Now the Subject in our present case is not so much our meer Faculty of Understanding, as the Points of Faith it self in our Soul, or the judging Power of our Soul consider'd precisely as affected with these Points; for, 'tis *these*, or our judging Power

The main Thesis demonstrated from the want of Potentiality in the Subject.

Power taken meerly as conversant about *These*, that is, our Judgments, which our Opponents must affirm *True*, yet *Possible to be False*. Since therefore both the Points themselves and our Judgments consist formally in *Affirmation* and *Negation*, that is, in *is* and *is not*, which are indivisible, and constituted such by a Formality the most formal and actual that can be, (as hath been shown) they can have, as such, no Indifferency or Potentiality in them to the contrary, neither Natural nor Metaphysical; nor, consequently, Possibility of Falshood.

From the, § 2. The Position of our Adversaries otherwise, is still render'd more absurd by this necessity of putting a consideration, that even in Nature where consistency of there is the greatest Potentiality that is, Truth with *viz. First Matter*, the Subject is not yet Falshood. capable of opposit Qualities at once, but successively; at least in the same part: Whereas, their Position is not that Faith which is now True is possible to be False afterwards upon the Alteration of some Contingent Matter; but, that 'tis Possible now to be False, or possible to be now False, for any thing any man knows; that is, the understanding may have possibly Truth and Falshood in it at once, and

and as to the same Part or Point.

§ 3. But 'tis still far more irrational, in regard these seeming Contraries (True) and (False,) apply'd to the Propositions we speak of, have in them the perfect nature of *Contradictories*; it being necessary that in those which speak *de presenti*, one should be express'd by [*is existent*] the other by [*is not existent*] as 'tis in those which speak preteritly and futurely, that one should be express'd by (*has been*) or (*shall be*;) the other by (*has not been*) or (*shall not be*;) To think then they can at once be *True* and *False*, is to judge that *Contradictories* may be verified of the same, or that both sides of the Contradiction may be true.

§ 4. Again, Truth being a *Conformity* of the mind to the Thing, and Falseness a *Disconformity*; to say, a Proposition is *True*, and yet possible to be *False*, is to say, that the mind, consider'd as judgingly conversant about that Proposition, may be at once *Conformable* and *Disconformable* to the same thing. Too wild a Position to be introduc'd into a rational nature, by any thing but such a wilful and blind passion, as must first actually corrupt, and, in fine, tend

From the; otherwise, necessity of putting Contradictories to be true.

From the; otherwise, necessity of putting it possible the mind should be at once conformable and disconformable to the thing.

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From the  
Impossibi-  
lity of dif-  
ferent Re-  
spects here  
to avoid  
a Contra-  
diction.

to destroy the very nature it self.  
§ 5. And, to void this Thesis from all possible evasion, here can be no different Respects according to which these Affirmations and Negations may be made, so to avoid Contradiction; but all such Respects are excluded, both out of the nature of the Predicate in most of those Propositions, as hath been shewn (*Evid.* 1. § 5.) as also out of the nature of the Points of Faith; which, standing in the abstract, descend not to, nor meddle with subsuming Respects, but have their Notions compleated in the common words which express them. And, lastly, because *Truths* and *Falshoods* are not capable of Distinctions and Respects: For, however a Proposition taken into Consideration and scanning whether it be true or no, may admit Respects and Distinctions, and so be affirm'd to be in this regard *True*, in that *False*; yet, what is once accepted to be *True*, cannot in any Respect afterwards be affirm'd possible to be not *True*, or *False*. For example, this Proposition [*An Ethiopian is white*] is distinguish'd by Respects to several parts, and in regard to his *Teeth* 'tis true; to his *skin*, 'tis false: But after those  
Re-

Respects have distinguish'd the Ambiguity of it, and so, by dividing it into two Propositions, settled one to be *True*, the other to be *False*, there can be no further use of Respects or Distinctions, which are to antecede to Truth and Falseness by clearing the doubtfulness of Propositions, and can have no place after the *Truth* is once acknowledg'd, or supervene to it. He then that once acknowledges Points of Faith to be *Truths*, can have no Assistance from recourse to this and the other Respect, to evade a Contradiction when he affirms they may be *False*.

§ 6. Again, 'tis particularly opposite to the nature of a Soul to have such an Act in her as to judg a thing *True* yet *possible to be False* at the same time. For, our Soul as to her Judging Power is essentially a Capacity of Truth; whence the First Principles which ground all Truths are so connatural to her, that she cannot but embrace them and judg them true. Nothing therefore being more opposite to Truth than a Contradiction, it follows that nothing is more impossible to be receiv'd or subjected in the Soul according to her Judging Power than

From the  
nature of  
the Soul,

than a Contradiction; that is, no implicatory or contradictory Act can settle there. Now, to judg a Proposition or Point to be *true*, is to judg the thing to *exist* just as it affirms; and, to judg it *Possible to be False*, is to judg it *Possible not to exist* as it affirms; and this, not in order to different times but the same; that is, to judg a Proposition or Point true yet possible to be false, is the same, as to judg the thing actually is, and yet perhaps is not at the same time; and this, as appears by our former Discourse, not to be avoided in our case by difference or diversity of Respects. Wherefore, since such an Act is not possible to be in the Judging Power of the Soul, 'tis most manifest, that he who holds one side of the Contradiction, cannot possibly hold the other; that is, he who holds Faith may be False, cannot hold that 'tis True; and that, if it be held and profess'd to be True, it ought also to be held and profess'd *Impossible to be false*.

From the necessity of putting the Soul at once determin'd and inde- § 7. Moreover, the Soul, antecedently to its being inform'd by the Object, was *indifferent* and *undetermin'd* to judg it True or False, that is, to be or not to be; but, when it came afterwards through considera-

deration of the Thing or Object to judg<sup>termin'd</sup>  
 it *true*, it became *determin'd*; and how<sup>in order to</sup>  
 but by a Notion the most determinative<sup>the same</sup>  
 of any other, *viz.* that of *being* or *is*: where-  
 fore, since to put in her at the same time  
 a Judgment of its *possibility* to be *False*,  
 puts her to be *indetermin'd*, and this in or-  
 der to the same, This Position puts the  
 Soul to be at once *determinate* and *inde-*  
*terminate* as to the same, which states  
 are as vastly distant as *actual Being* and  
*not-actual Being* can remove them. Nay,  
 this monstrous *Thesis* makes the Soul In-  
 determinate to either side, that is to Truth  
 as well as to Falshood, even after it had  
 suppos'd her determin'd to Truth; For,  
 to judg a Point *possible to be False*, puts  
 the Judgment Potential or Indetermin'd  
 as to the *Falshood* of it; and *False* signi-  
 fying *not-true*, *possible to be False* must sig-  
 nifie *possible to be not True*, and so include  
 Potentiality or Indetermination to  
 Truth also: in regard, were it *actually*  
 True, it could not be *Possible to be not*  
*True*, or not it self. The Soul must then  
 be *Indeterminate to either*, that is, neither  
 judg it true nor false, even after she was  
 supposed to judg it *true*, in case she can  
 then judg it *possible to be false*; and, con-  
 E sequent-

sequently, this Position of Faith's possibility to be false, cannot, without highest contradiction, stand with a hearty conceit that *Faith is True*. To think to escape the force of this Argument by al-  
 leadging the respect to different Motives, or, that the Understanding was not perfectly but partly determin'd, is in our case frivolous. For I ask, was it determin'd enough by any Intellectual or Rational Motives to judg the thing *is*? if not, what made it judg so when those Motives could not? Is it not evident it must be some weakness or some *blind* motive in the Will, not Light of Understanding? But, if it were determin'd enough to judg the thing *is* or *is true*, 'tis also enough for my Argument and Purpose.

From the  
 Formal  
 Natures  
 of Truth  
 and Fals-  
 hood.

§ 8. Especially the force of this Argument will be better penetrated when it shall be well consider'd in what *Truth* and *Falshood* formally consist; and that, taken rightly, they are certain Affections or Dispositions of our Understanding. For, that is not to be called *True* by me which is not *True to me*; nor is any thing *True to me*, but when 'tis *seen* by me to be so in the Object; and to be thus *seen*



seen by me, is the Object to inform and actuate my Understanding Power as 'tis Judicative; whence that Power, as 'tis thus actuated, gains a Conformity to the thing it self, in which consists the precise nature of Truth. However then Truth come from the Object which is the ground or cause of it, yet 'tis formally no where but in the Understanding or Judgment; as appears evidently from this, that Truth is found in Propositions: now Propositions are not in the thing formally, (though, when true, they are deriv'd hence) but in the mind only, and significatively in words. Truth then is that whereby *I am true* or veracious when I say interiously, *the Thing is*, or *is thus* and *thus*; wherefore the Truth of any Point is not had till this Actuation or Determination of my Power by the Object, which as it's Formal Cause makes this Conformity to it, be put: And, this put, to think that at the same time or at once the mind can be unactuated, undetermined, potential or disconformable to it, is too gross a conceit to enter into the head of any man endued with the common Light of Reason. Whoever then affirm's Faith or those Propositions which

express Faith possible to be false, he is convinc't by the clearest Light of Reason (in case the desperation of maintaining the Truth of Faith, for want of grounds, drives him not to say any thing, but that he speaks candidly what he thinks) not to judg or say from his heart, *His Faith is indeed True*, having never experienc't in his Soul, for want of Principles to put it there, that the Object or Ground of his Faith hath wrought in it that Conformity to the thing, in which *Truth* consists; and, consequently, that, when he professes Points of Faith to be *Truths*, he either by a fortunate piece of folly understands not what he sayes, or colloques and dissembles with God and the world for honour or some other Interest.

From the  
notion of  
*Metaphy-  
sical Unity*

§ 9. 'Tis hence farther demonstrated that the Position we impugn destroys the Notion of *Metaphysical Unity*, consisting in an Indivision or Indistinction of any Notion, Nature or Thing in it self, and a Division or Distinction of it from all other: For, according to this Tenet, *Truth* or the Conformity of our Understanding to the Object, put by our joyn't-supposition that the Proposi-

tion



tion of Faith is *true*, may possibly be Disconformity or Falshood, and this Determinate State, Indeterminate, which makes the mind *as* having in it One Notion, that is indeed that *One Notion*, capable to admit into its bowels *Another*, not only disparate, but Opposit, that is, *One possible to be not One, but Another*.

§ 10. The same is demonstrated concerning Metaphysical *Verity*. For this Position makes the self-same mental Proposition or Disposition of the Understanding we call *Truth*, possible to be *Falshood*; that is, *Possible not to be the same with it self*, which subverts all *Metaphysical Verity*; that is, the Foundation or ground of all *Formal Verity* or Truth in the World.

§ 11. The same injury demonstrative-ly accrues to Metaphysical Bonity or Goodness. For, it makes that Conformity of the mind to the thing which is Truth, and so the *Good or Perfection* of the Understanding, to be at once possible to be Falshood, that is, possible to be *not good* but *harmful* and destructive to it.

§ 12. I make no question but my Adversaries will think to elude the force of these three last Demonstrations, and per-

haps of some others by alleadging that they deny absolutely Truth can possibly be Falshood, and that they mean only that though the Points of Faith appear now upon considerable Motives to be True, yet those Motives secure it not from being absolutely False; but not so that they can really be *both*. And I grant this would be a good Answer, in case they did not affirm Points of Faith to be really *True*, (upon which Supposition taken from the common *Language* and Sentiments of all that profess Christianity, even theirs too as Christians I proceed) but only profess they were *Likely to be True*; for then it would be so far from following that Truth could be Falshood, or that the same Points could be *both* true and not true at once, that, in that case, it would follow they ought to affirm they were *neither* True nor False; since *likely to be True* and *True indeed* are no more the *same*, than a Statue which is *like* a man is the same with a *man*. But, if all Christians be bound to profess, and themselves actually do so, that their Faith is *indeed True*, then let us see how they will avoid the consequences of my former discourse, when they assert

assert it withall *Possible to be False*. For it is that very individual judgment they make concerning a Point of Faith, or an Act of Faith, which they must affirm to be True or a Truth, that is conformable to the thing; and 'tis of the self-same Judgment, though call'd by them a *Truth*, of which they affirm that 'tis *possible to be False*, or disconformable to the Object: And, this is not so meant as if it should become so afterwards, either by some Alteration of that Judgment into another, or of the thing to which it is Conformable; but that even that very self-same Judgment, while they speak and hold it after their Fashion *True*, may even then possibly be *False*; from which 'tis evident, that for want of solid Grounds to settle Points of Faith in their Soul as Truths, they hold them indeed only *Likelihoods*, whose Nature 'tis to be *Possible to be False*; and yet, forc't by the natural sense and language of Christianity, which 'tis dishonourable to them too palpably to contradict, they become oblig'd to profess them *Truths*, whose firm Grounds make them Impossible to be False; though at the same time they affix to them the proper

badg of *Likelihoods*, *Possibility of Falshood*. Whence by confounding the purest and solidest nature of Truth's Gold, with other Notions of so base an alloy that it cannot admit any mixture with them, all Principles which are to support the true Natures or Beings of things, are by consequence attacqu'd; and, could their Position stand, would quite be overthrown.

### Fourth Eviction.

From the  
contrary  
*Thesis* be-  
ing destru-  
ctive to  
the First  
Principle  
in all Mc-  
raphy  
icks.

§ 1. **T**HE very first Principle of all Truth cannot escape the pernicious Attempts of this Erroneous Tenter. 'Tis this *Quicquid est, dum est, impossibile est non esse*, or, *The same thing cannot both be and not be at once*. For in Faith-Propositions, especially those in which *Existent* is the Predicate, [as the *Trinity is*, &c.] 'tis the same to say the Proposition is *True*, as to say the Subject is *Existent*; and the same to say it *may be False*, as to say 'tis *Possible to be not Existent*, or that it *may not be*; and our Adversaries relate not this to a several circumstance of time in which they may be

be conceiv'd to agree to the Subject successively, for their sense is that this Proposition [*a Trinity is, &c.*] may (for any thing they know) even now possibly be False while they pronounce it true. Since then to affirm a thing *Existent*, and yet *Possible to be not Existent at the same time*, is to say directly, that *it may be and may not be at once*, 'tis most manifest that either they must not say *a Trinity is Existent*, or else 'tis not possible not to be *Existent at the same time*; that is, if indeed that Point of Faith be *True*, they must with all affirm it Impossible to be False; as also that they who affirm both, profess to hold direct Contradictories. So that while these men go about to violate the Sanctuary of Faith, whose solid Nature is so built that 'tis intrinsically repugnant to Falsity, they by consequence subvert the Ground-work and Bottom-Principles of all Truth. So wisely did that best Master of Mankind settle his Doctrine, that we cannot call into question that which makes us *Christians*, without renouncing all that makes us *Men*.

§ 2. I foresee my Adversaries will still object that I mistake them and impose upon them to relate their Discourse to

From the  
Impossibility  
of a  
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judg a  
thing  
True, with  
a Motive  
to judg it  
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be False.

the real Being of the thing as it stands in the thing it self, whereas they intend it only to mean the thing as standing under Notion, or consider'd according to divers Motives they either have or may have to perswade or dissuade them as to the Verity of it; and in plain terms that they mean only this; that Faith is not so conveniently proposed to them but that the grounds of it for any thing appears evidently are possible to be False. I answer, that I also speak of the thing as standing under Notion, else how could I put it in Propositions, and discourse from the nature and contradictionness of those Propositions as I do all along? But yet, lest my Notions should be airy and empty, I am careful to take them from the nature of the thing, and to rate the Truth of my Propositions from the Conformity they have to the Object as in it self; and the force of my Motives from the relation they have to First Principles; and then I am sure to discourse and speak solidly. The same I expect from them: Whence I ask them, whether they assent to this Proposition, [*A Trinity is Existent*] that is, judg it really and *indeed True*, or not? If not, I argue



argue not against them at present, but leave them to be confuted by the natural Sentiments, and punish'd by the abhorrence of all that profess themselves Christians, even their own party; of whom I have so good an Opinion that they will heartily abominate that man who shall make any difficulty to profess and maintain that there is *indeed* a Trinity, or that his Faith is *True*. But, in case they do assent indeed to this Proposition, [*A Trinity is*] or judg it *True*, then I contend farther that they must be forc't likewise to affirm it to be so in the thing in it self as they predicate; that is, there is found in the same Thing or Being what corresponds to the Notion of *Trinity* and the Notion of *Existent*; which put, and that they thus judg it to pass in the *Thing*, I affirm that, out of the formal Opposition between *Existent* and *not-Existent*, and their Impossibility in the same subject, which they cannot but know, it follows necessarily that they must judg it Impossible it should be *not-Existent*, or that that Proposition should be false at the same time they judg it true and the thing existent; nor ever afterwards, unless the thing  
whence

whence it's Truth is taken be *Alterable*. I will endeavour to explain my self a little clearer if I can. As *real existence* so ultimately determines and actuates the Thing in which it is, that it excludes, while there, all possibility of *real non-Existence*: so Intellectual or *Judg'd Existence* express'd by the word [*is*] so ultimately determines and actuates the Soul as to its Judging Power, that it excludes, while there, all Possibility of *judg'd non-Existence*; in such sort, that (the Soul being by Nature fram'd a Capacity of Truth) 'tis no less Impossible it can *judg* a thing may be and may not be at once, than 'tis that a thing should at once be and not be *in reality*. Again, I affirm that 'tis equally impossible the Motive, which (in case she acts rationally) convinces the Soul the Thing *is*, should consist with a Possibility of it's *not Being*, as 'tis that the Soul can at once *judg* it *to be* and *not to be*, or that the thing can *both be* and *not be really*; since this Motive was the *Cause* of the other *Judgment*, and an *Effect* of the Thing's *Being so in reality*; and depends on the same Incompossibility of *Being* and *not-Being*, or on the simplicity of the Notion

is; and, lastly, on a Maxim as evident as what is most; namely, that *the same is the same with its self*. Whence I make account whoever has sufficient Grounds to affirm a Point of Faith *is*, or *is true*, that is, is more than *Likely to be True*, has withall true Grounds to affirm it *Impossible to be False*; and that, who confesses it *Possible to be False*, disclaims any true Grounds of judging or professing it *is*, or *is True*; and so judges it in his heart to be but a high *Probability* or a good *Likelihood* at most, which is enough for plausible Talkers, but falls far short of making a man a true Christian.

§ 3. And, hence, we may with hor-  
 rour and pity reflect upon the perniciousness of Heresy, in corrupting the Understanding, that eye whose defect *fills* (as our Saviour discourses it) *the whole Body with darkness*; by subverting fundamentally all those Principles in which the Common Light of all Knowledg consists; and perverting (as much as the Goodness of Nature establish't by our Creator will suffer it) that very Faculty which makes us *Men* in what is most Intrinsic and Essential to it, the knowledg of the first Principles,  
 that

that is, despoiling it quite of all Intellectual Perfection due to it's nature: But to return to our Arguments.

§ 4. Can any discourse be taken higher than from first Principles? Yes, in some sort there can; that is, from the *First Cause or Being*, or, à *Patre Lumini- num, the Father of lights*, from whom all created Natures, whence those Principles are borrowed, and the very nature of our Understanding it self, where they are found, derive their Origin. This *First Being* Metaphysicks demonstrate to be *Self Existent*, that is, Infinite and Unlimited in Existence, and consequently in all perfections; amongst which, since to be a *self-determination* to act according to right Reason is one, God *has* or rather *is* that too. It being then according to right Reason to *do* what is *seen* clearly to be *best*, all things consider'd; God, seeing what is absolutely Best, must therefore be Self-determin'd to *do* still what is *Best*. This put, looking into the notions of *Good* and *Best*, we find them to be both *relative*, and that what is *good* to none is *not good at all*: Applying which to God's Perfection every way Infinite and

and no way farther perfectible, 'tis seen manifestly that when he is said to operate exteriorly in this world what is *Best*, it cannot mean what is Good or Best to *Himself*, or anything which is His *own Good*, or Perfection, but, what is good or best to *his Creatures*. And hence we settle this most comfortable, most evident and most enlightning Conclusion, that *God does what's best for his Creatures*. And, it being evidently Best for them to be guided or govern'd according to the true natures which he has given them, it follows also that God governs his *Creatures* connaturally, or suitably to their right natures.

§ 5 Hence it follows that, if we can once demonstrate that to *Act* thus or thus is most Connatural to such a *Species* or Nature, we can demonstrate from the Highest, First, Best and most Immutable Cause, that, however Contingency finds place in divers particulars, yet that *kind*, as 'tis subjected to Gods guidance, is govern'd most agreeably to its true and right nature, which his Creative Wisdom and Goodness had at first given it.

§ 6 Particularly, 'tis consequent that  
it

it cannot be God should command or expect from his Creatures what is opposite to the true Nature he had given them. For, since their being what they are, or their Metaphysical Verity is fixt by the *Idea's* in his own divine Understanding, from which in their Creation they unerringly flow'd, hence, as to put them at first was to act conformably to himself or his own Wisdom, so, to violate them, is to work Disconformably and unlike to himself; which it cannot be thought God should do through Inclination or Choice, and as little be made to do it through force.

§ 7. Again, since we can no otherwise discourse of God but by such Notions as we gather here from Creatures; which, however *improper*, yet all grant to be *truly* pronounc't of him if they signify Perfection; Hence, if we can demonstratively evince that such an Action is truly agreeable to Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, &c. and such others disagreeable, we can know Demonstratively that *those* are worthy to proceed from him, *These* Impossible to have so infinitely perfect an Author.

§ 8. What

§ 8. What use may be made of this Principle of Supreme Wisdom [*God does what is best for his Creatures*] will be seen hereafter. The use we make of it at present, is to adde a new degree of establishment to our former Discourses by applying it to them. I argue then thus: Since 'tis agreeable to *rational Nature*, or rather since 'tis the very Nature it self, not to hold any thing but upon the tenure of Immediate Connexion, or seeing that the first Principle of all rational discourse, [*The same is the same with it self*] is engag'd for the Truth both of the Premisses and Consequence; since Assents not thus abetted are but *Opinions*, and, as such, deprave Humane Nature; since nothing but *true Certainty* can fix the Understanding in a steadiness of Judgment; since 'tis connatural to Rational Nature to proceed upon *Principles*, which is not to be had where there is Possibility of Falshood; since this Possibility renders Faith unmain- tainable; and so, contrary to rational nature, makes Christians hold and profess what they cannot make good; since the putting Points of Faith to be Truths, yet possible to be False, puts the Soul in violent and Impossible States, as of

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Indetermination and Determination, Conformity and Disconformity to the Object; nay subjects her to the judging Contradictions True, which is most repugnant to her Nature; since it subverts all the Principles of our Understanding, both Logically and Metaphysically consider'd, that is radically and fundamentally destroys all possible *Rationality*; since it destroys the Nature of *Faith* it self, and by consequence the stability of all the Natures in the world; since, I say, these things are so, as hath been particularly prov'd in my precedent Discourses, it follows that 'tis the greatest Impossibility that God, 'who does the best for his Creatures, can govern or manage his Darling-Creature, *Mankind*, on this preternatural fashion: But, 'tis Certain that the way to arrive at Faith is particularly *laid* by Gods *Providence*, and so is an especial part of his *Government* of Mankind; 'tis known also and acknowledg'd that he has *commanded* us to profess the *Truth* of our Faith in due occasions; Therefore, 'tis Impossible the Means, Grounds or Rule of Faith, and, consequently, Faith it self, should be capable to be False; Seeing this last Position, joyn'd to the other

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other immediately foregoing, induces all the Absurdities mentioned in my former Discourse, and pins them upon the Deity as on their first Cause. So horrible and Diabolical a Tenet is this of the *Possible Falshood of Faith*, that it calumniates Heaven it self; nor can any thing but an Invincible Ignorance in the Maintainers of it, excuse them from highest Blasphemy, & from making the unenvious Fountain of all Goodness like our own narrow and crooked Selves.

### *Fifth Eviction.*

§ 1. **L** Et us hear next what the Science of Divinity both Speculative and Moral will award concerning the Point in Question.

§ 2. The Wisdom of the Eternal Father having been pleas'd to take our Nature upon him, and, amongst his other Offices he perform'd towards Mankind, that of a *Master* being manifestly one; we cannot doubt but that he both *would* and *could*, that is, *did* accomplish what belong'd to that Office. Again, true Divinity assigning one main, if not the chiefest, Reason why the *Second Person*

From the nature of the proper Agent in introducing Mankind.

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was made *Man*, to be this, that, it being requisite God should come and converse with us visibly, to cause in us *Knowledge* of his heavenly Doctrine, or be our *Master*, and Knowledge or Wisdom being appropriated to the Second Person, it was therefore most fit that Person should be Incarnate; it follows that the Office of a *Master* in our Saviour Christ springs peculiarly out of the nature of his *Divine Personality*, and not of his *Humanity* precisely, as does his *Suffering* and *Dying* for us, &c. Wherefore the *Proper Agent* of Instructing and Teaching Mankind being, as such, *Infinitely Perfect*, 'tis evidently consequent Christ perform'd the Office of a *Master*, or wrought the effects proper to a *Teacher* as such, with all imaginable Perfection.

§ 3. It being then the proper Office or Effect of a *Master* or *Teacher* to make his Schollers *know* his Doctrine is *True*, we cannot think but that this Divine or Infinitely-perfect *Master* made them absolutely or perfectly *know* the *Truth* of his Doctrine.

§ 4. And, because the end of this Teaching was not terminated in those few himself convers'd with, nor in the Christians of the First Age, but was

principally intended for the *Body of Mankind*, which was *future* in respect of them; it follows that this Enlightening and Instructing now spoken of, was to be equally extended to the following World of Christians: they being all Sectators or Followers of his Doctrine; that is, his *Scholars*, and He their *Master*. Unless then he had taken order that succeeding Ages also should have perfect Assurance or *know* his Doctrine was absolutely *True*, he would have set up a School and laid no means to preserve the far greater part, and in a manner the *whole Body* of his Scholars (or *Christians*) from *Ignorance and Error*.

§ 5. All Christians then both the Primitive and their Successors had and will have means to *Know* absolutely Christian Doctrine is *True*. This *means* we call the *Rule of Faith*: Both the Rule of Faith then must be *known* to be veracious, and Faith which is built on it to be *absolutely True*, and by consequence to be absolutely *Impossible to be False*.

§ 6. Besides Man being an Intellectual Creature, 'tis evident the true Perfection of his Nature consists in *Knowing*; and this, whether we consider him as a Speculator, or as an Actor. For if

From the nature of the Persons instructed.

the thing may Possibly be False for any thing he knows, then he is most evidently *Ignorant* whether it be False or no; that is, whether it be True or no; which speaks Imperfection in his Nature as 'tis a *Capacity of Knowledge*; And, if he be to *Assent* about it, 'tis evidently a less Perfection and worse for mankind to go to work unassuredly than assuredly; Faith then being Gods Ordinance, and God doing what is *best for Mankind*, it follows Faith is *perfectly secure* to him; that is, he must *know* it to be such; and, consequently, 'tis not subject to the Contingency of being False.

From  
Faith's  
being a  
*Virtue.*

§ 7. But, leaving *Man*, the *Subject* of Faith, and reflecting upon *Faith* it self in us, the first thing that offers it self to our Consideration is, that it's *Habit* is a *Virtue*, and consequently *Rational*. Also that it's *Assent* is an Assent upon Authority; since then 'tis demonstrated formerly that there can be in reason no Assent without Certain Grounds, and that what is Certain is Impossible to be False, it follows that the Grounds of Faith, and, consequently Faith it self is not possible to be False.

From  
Faith's

§ 8. Next, Faith is an *Intellectual Virtue*, that is, apt to perfect mans under

understanding as such; that is, 'tis to him a *Knowledge*, and so informs his mind with *Truths*. The Nature of Faith then forces that Points of Faith must be *Truths*, and, so, as is manifoldly demonstrated, Faith it self is not possible to be False.

§ 9. Again, this Intellectual *Virtue* call'd *Faith* is also a *Supernatural* one; and, therefore, as such, proceeds from an *Agent* infinitely more perfect than any can be found in Nature; therefore the immediate effect aim'd at by Faith, that is, the informing the Understanding, would be perform'd with infinite advantage as far as concerns that Supernatural Agent's or God's part; and, if it be not so exquisitely perform'd, it must spring from some Incapacity in the Subject. There being then in this Effect of *informing the Understanding* two Considerations, *viz. Evidence*, which is had either by Experience of our Senses, (of which Spiritual Natures, the chief Objects of Faith are incapable) or by *intrinsic Mediums*, that is *Demonstration* of those Spiritual things; of which, taking the *Generality* of mankind, the Subject of Faith, very few are capable;

being an  
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al Virtue.

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Faith's be-  
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And that other of *Certainty*, attainable both by those Intrinsic and also Extrinsic *Mediums*, or Authority; which *Authority*, by means of the Practicableness of it's Nature, all are to a great degree able to understand; it follows that, here being no violence or unsuitableness to Humane Nature consider'd in it's Generality, the supernatural Agent or Cause of Faith will effect here a *greater Certainty* than meer natural Impressions could produce; that is, (all Extrinsic Arguments being finally resolv'd into Intrinsic ones) the Best and Chief Nature in the world will be made use of, and most strongly supported to make up the greatest Authority that is possible, and so to establish this Certainty of Faith and it's Principles beyond that of any Humane Sciences. But divers pieces of Humane Science, nay the least particle of true Science is acknowledg'd *impossible to be False*; Faith therefore *a fortiori* must be *such* also.

From the  
firmness  
Superna-  
tural Faith  
ought to  
have above  
Natural.

§ 10. This Supernaturality of *Faith*, (by which word we mean *Divine Faith*) convinces that it ought to exceed all other Faiths according to the Notion of *Faith in common*; that is, it ought to partake what-

whatever Perfection truly belongs to *Faith* or *Belief*, as such, in an especial manner; and far above what is found in *Humane Faiths*; in a word, it ought to have as much in it as can elevate it under the Notion of *Faith*, without wronging that Notion or Nature: *Faith* then in common, as distinguished from Science and Opinion, being an *Assent upon Authority*, and *Firmness* being evidently a *Perfection* in an Assent, *Divine Faith* ought to have a far greater degree of *firmness* in it than any *Humane Faith* whatsoever; Wherefore, since *Humane Faith* can rise to that Degree of *Stability*, that Mankind would think him mad, that is, a Renouncer of evident Reason, who can think seriously it can be an Error or possible to be False, (for example, the Belief of this present Age concerning the Existence of *France* or *K. James*) *Divine Faith* being *Supernatural*, ought to be *more firmly* grounded; and consequently more highly Impossible to be False.

§ 11. Again, we find that the more we are ascertain' that a Convictive Authority is engag'd for the Truth of any thing, the more strongly that Authority is

Another  
Proof  
from the  
same head.

is apply'd to our Understanding; and consequently, more forcibly works its effects there, or subdues it to Assent; whence this Certitude is so far from being *against* the nature of Belief, that 'tis most manifest it *strengthens* and *perfects* it under that Notion. *Divine Faith* then being *Supernatural*, has a peculiar right to have such an Application of the Divine Authority to the understanding, as may be truly Certain or Impossible to be False; since by such an Application 'tis most evident that not *less* but *more* Belief is given to the said Authority, and the understanding becomes more humbled and subjected to it; that is, by such an Application, how scientifically evident soever it be, the *Act* of Faith is never the nearer being an Act of Science, but is perfecter under the very Notion of an *Act* of Faith; being still a steadier, heartier, and firmer Assent for the Authority's sake, which is thus strongly and closely apply'd, and a greater Reliance on it.

From the  
sequen-  
ces, that  
Christian  
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§ 12. Moreover, Faith being to work through Charity, and to guide our actions as we are Christians; and rational actions being so much more perfect by how



how much more *knowingly* they proceed from the Agent; unless Faith were truly *Certain*, that is, *Impossible to be false*, Christian action would fall short of the Perfection found in most ordinary Humane Actions of an inferiour and (in comparison) trifling concern; and a Christian would go to work with less assuredness and steadiness than a Carpenter and Cobler; and this, not out of the Impediments of Original Sin, (which is Contingent and Extrinsecal to Faith or Religion) but merely out of a defect of Certainty in the Intrinsicals of Faith it self and it's Grounds; which beyond all evasion, affixes the Imperfection upon Christianity it self.

§ 13. I may add, that Arts and Sciences, ev'n the most slight and inconsiderable ones, and which are most lyable to Contingency in their Effects or the Actions springing from them, have yet all of them Certainty in their Principles. Religion then being the Art of carrying or guiding Souls to Bliss, and the Points of Faith its Principles, in virtue of which 'tis to perform this Effect; and the Ground of Faith the main and supream Principle, whose Firmness is to establish

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should proceed from the Agents in the perfectest manner.

That otherwise Christian Religion would be more defective in point of Principles than any other Art or Science.

the rest, and, so, render them efficacious : unless Faith it self and its Grounds were truly Certain, the Principles of all Religion would be exceedingly more defective and inefficacious than those of any petty Mechanical Trade, and indeed *no Principles.*

### Sixth Eviction.

§ 1. **T**HE foregoing Considerations are more enforc'd by this, that Faith is the Light which discovers to us our *Last End* and the *way to it*; that is, which is to guide us in that to which all our other Concerns are subservient, and all our Actions directed. Unless therefore this Knowledge or Light of Faith be steady and firm, all our whole Life, as Christians, would be feeble, tottering and uneven : as wanting Certainty of the First Practical Principles which are to ground our Christian Behaviour; nay, Certainty of the *End* we should aim at, without which the whole Course of our Life must needs be staggering and inconsistent, and it self but a blind groping in the dark.

From  
Faith's be-  
ing the  
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of our last  
End, and  
of the way  
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§ 2. More-

§ 2. Moreover, since all Mankind, even the Heathens themselves, had perfect Evidence and Certainty of the Practical Principles of Natural Morality, which grounded their Moral (seeming) Virtues, as is confest; which Virtues yet, for want of the Light of Faith teaching them to *know* their true last End, and so perform the Acts of those Virtues for it's sake, or order them to Heaven, fell short of elevating them towards it and bringing them thither: It follows that, had there not been provision made that Points of Faith, the Principles of *Christian* Morality, should be as Certain as were the other, things would have been perversly order'd; that is, greater care would have been taken to create those imperfect Dispositions of the Soul, which alone were not able to secure one man from the State of Eternal Misery, than for those Sublime Perfections, call'd *Christian Virtues*, which are the direct steps for man to arrive at Eternal Bliss, and the Immediate means to attain the End he was created for, the Sight of God.

§ 3. Especially, since this Last End and Chief Good of Mankind is not attained-

From the Certainty the Heathens had of the Principles of their imperfect Morality.

From mans last End being

only attainable by Intellectual means.

tainable by *External Actions* or *Moral Actions*; but *Intellectually*, or by *Interior Acts* of the Soul; by which he is promoted forwards even to the very ascension of it; that is, by force of *Knowledge* or *Truth* exciting him to act, and guiding him in those actions: 'Tis manifest, the Points of Faith must be *Truths*, and so, as has been manifoldly prov'd above, *Impossible to be false*.

From Virtue's being the connatural Effect of Truth, and Vice of Falseness.

§ 4. Again, *Virtues* spring connaturally from *Truths*, and *Vice* from *Falseness*: If Faith then be *Possibly False*, the *Practises* springing thence are *Possibly no Virtues* but *Vices*; and, so, they, and consequently, Faith, whence they proceed, possibly would not dispose, but indispose us towards our last End; which destroyes perfectly the Notion of *Faith* and *Virtues* too. *Faith*, therefore, would be no *Faith*, were it possible to be False.

§ 5. You'l object, a Reason merely Probable or Morally-Certain is sufficient to make Us act for a Temporal Good; much more, then, for an Eternal and Infinite one; since the greater Goodness is in the Object, the less is the hazard; and consequently the more the

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the Reasonableness to act for it. I answer, though, if all other things corresponded, the Objection would be Valid, and the reason given for it, speaking abstractedly, be really Conclusive: Yet, in our present case, there are so many things which make it Unparallell that no Shadow of Consequence can be made from the one to the other. First, for the reason lately given; *Viz.* because our Last End being in it self Spiritual and most Perfect, is not attainable but by Means of *Best Spiritual* Perfections or Virtues; and the more *knowingly* these proceed from Us the better they are; according to that saying, *None is cordially and solidly good, who knows not why he ought to be good*: whence they cannot be *Best* in their kinde, nor, consequently, Means fit to attain that End, Unless they proceed at least, from *True Knowledge*; which cannot be had by a mere Probability, how high soever it be. Whereas, Material and Temporary Goods depend not on a constant course of Causes or Dispositions towards them knowable by us: but very frequently, if not equally on a Chance-

Chanceable or Contingent cast of Things; whence we use to say, *Fools have the best Fortune*. Hence, the *intending* and *directing* part in such Actions depends on the Knowledge of some particulars; but the Attainment is carry'd on by Material Means: nay, very frequently, there is no knowledge at all requisite in any respect. For Example, He that, by the death of a hundred Relations in a Plague-time should alone survive and so inherit their Estates, would be really rich, whither any interior Act of his minde in the least contributed to it or not; that is, though he never *desir'd*, aim'd at, or even *thought* of it. But, if a Man in time of persecution and Martyrdom should say within himself, *I cannot believe there is a God or a Next world; Yet Ile venture to dye rather then deny them; in hopes that, if perhaps there be such a thing or State, he will give me a far greater reward*: such a Man I dare affirm to be no nearer gaining Heaven by this Act no better principled, than if he had never had any such Act at all; in regard he wanted that First necessary disposition which

St.

St. Paul and Connaturality require;  
*Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere quia*  
*Deus est.* Heb. 11. v. 6.

6. Again, Faith is intended for a  
 Spiritual Armour to rebat all the as-  
 saults and temptations of our three  
 Ghostly Enemies, Original Corruption  
*in us*, the Vanity of the World *about*  
*us*, and the Cruelty of the Devil and  
 Wicked men *over us*. Hence the Ad-  
 vice of the Apostle, *cui resistite fortis*  
*in Fide*; hence his recommending to  
 us above all things to take *Scutum Fi-*  
*dei*; hence the Contempt of all World-  
 ly Honours, Pleasures, and Riches in  
 Gods choice Saints, and their suffering  
 Persecution gladly for Conscience sake;  
 hence, lastly, their embracing and ev'n  
 courting Torments and Death it self  
 with such Alacrity and Constancy. But,  
 alas, how unactive had their Charity  
 and Zeal been: how dull their desire  
 to forego all present Goods, ev'n life  
 too among the rest; if this wicked  
 Doctrine had been in their hearts, that  
 perhaps all was a *lye*, which they pro-  
 fess, suffered, and dy'd for! And,  
 how coldly and timorously would  
 they have look'd Death in the face;

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having perfect Certainty on one side that they were about to lose all the known Goods they possess, for others unknown and uncertain? Well may a Natural sincerity preserve diverse persons who are out of the Church morally honest and innocent; but we must not hope for any eminent Sanctity or Heroick Act of Virtue from any Professors of such a Faith, if they follow their Teachers, maintaining there are no stronger Motives for the Truth of Christianity, to comfort and establish the Souls of the Faithful. And 'tis to be feared that, though their highly-conceited Probability or Moral Certainty (as they call it) be enough to *Exclude Actual Doubt*, while Men are in a State of Security and all things go well with them; Yet it will scarce be able to preserve them from *doubting Actually*, when they are upon the point of foregoing all the Goods they at present enjoy, and are so highly concern'd to be Certain of the Existence of those Future ones they hope for in lieu of them.

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other wise,

§ 7. Moreover, we are perfectly Certain by manifest Experience, of the *Existence*



istence of Temporal Goods, viz. Honours, Pleasures, Riches, &c. or, that such things are in the world; whereas, unless Faith be truly Certain, that is, *impossible to be false*, the Generality of *Mankind* cannot be perfectly assur'd ev'n of the *Existence of Heaven*, or those Future Goods for which they are to relinquish all present ones. Wherefore, the Existence of the thing being the first and main *Basis* of all Humane Action, and the Ground of all the other Motives: 'tis clear there's a manifest difference between acting for Heaven and for Temporal Goods, ev'n in this respect, whatever Parallel may be pretended in some other Considerations. Besides, all acting ev'n for Temporal Goods were unjustifiable, unless those Goods be held *Attainable*; and *de facto* we are perfectly certain that Honours, Pleasures, Riches, &c. not only *exist*, but are of such a nature also as they may be *attained* to, due means us'd; since we experience multitudes of men *have* and *do* daily arrive at them. But, ev'n, though Heav'n be held to *be*, yet it cannot be held to be *attainable*, unless the Proposals of Faith be Certain; since neither have those

Uncertainty of the Existence of Spiritual Goods, or the Attainableness of them in the next life.

who are to come to Faith seen nor experienc'd any man get Heav'n, nor discours'd with any whom they know to have come thence and seen it. So that I fear, were the Objection, concerning the Sufficiency of Probable Motives to make us act for Inferiour or Humane Goods, distinctly clear'd, it would be found not to mean that *Probability* of those Humane Good's *Existence* or *Attainableness* suffices; for example, that there are Riches in common, or that they may be gotten one way or other, both which are presupposed to the Action as certainly known: but it seems to mean only this, that men ought to proceed to Action though there be but Moral Certainty or great Likelihood that those Goods are actually to be attain'd in this or that circumstance of Time or Place, or by such or such means, as, by sending Ships to the Indies, inventing Water-works, Husbandry, Souldiery, and the like: which assertion held within its bounds will break no squares; seeing ev'n in the actual attainment of Heav'n *by me* or *by this particular way or means*, when those means depend on material Circumstances, there is found the same room for fail-

failure and contingency, notwithstanding the Certainty of Heav'n's *Existence* and *Attainableness* in common, secur'd to us perfectly by Faith. For, though *Virtue practic'd* is an Infallible Way to bring Souls to Bliss; yet no man has Certainty that any Extrinsic State he puts himself into, or material means he uses, will make him truly vertuous, or finally get him the end he aims at: but must content himself with Likelihoods, or the seeming-betterness of his putting himself in that State or Circumstance, or his using this or that means; in the same manner as it happens when he asks for Temporary Goods; and, for the success, leave it humbly in the hands of Divine Providence, or *miserentis Dei*, acknowledging with *David*, that *in manibus tuis Domine sortes meae*, and working out his Salvation with fear and trembling.

§ 8. Besides, to act Externally is in the power of the Will; but, to act Internally, at least as is requisite for each Effect, is not so. For, however the Will may set the Understanding to consider the Motive; yet it must be the Truth of the Object's Goodness, or the

From the, otherwise, preternaturalty in producing a due love of Heaven

clearness of the Proposal of it, which only can oblige connaturally the Understanding to conceit it as it ought, and consequently the Will to love it accordingly: in which *conceiting* and heartily *loving* not only the Intending and Commanding part of the Action is plac'd in our case, as it happens in our acting for material Goods; but also the Executive and Affecutive Parts of it. Not the same sleightness of Motive; therefore, or Moral Certainty, will here serve the turn; but true Certainty or Impossibility of Falshood is requir'd: this being the best and properest to beget a hearty, lively, steady, and all-overpowering Affection for Heav'n; and such as may (as it ought) make Christians practically repute all other things as *Dung* in comparison of That.

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bleness of  
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tive possi-  
ble to be  
False.

§ 9. But, the main consideration which forces the Certainty of *Faith* and the Motives which are to beget it, (that is, of the *Rule of Faith*) above those which ground our Action of pursuing Temporary Goods, is the unconceivable Mysteriousness of the Points of Faith: Truths exalted above the ordinary Course of Nature as far as Heav'n is above

above the Earth: Many of them looking so odd and uncouth to our course Humane Reason unrefin'd by Faith, that, as they seem'd of old *to the Greeks Foolishness*, so still they are acknowledgedly most unsuitable to the grossness of Fancy, by which the Generality of the world, especially those who are yet un-elevated by Christian Principles, are led; and confessedly *above Reason*; insomuch as it costs the best Wits of Christianity no small pains to maintain them not to be Contradictory or *Impossible to be True*. Putting, then, the Motives of Faith, and consequently Faith it self, *Possible to be False*; the only seeming Certainty (I might say, the confessed want of Certainty) of the Motives to believe would be so counterballanc'd by the Incredibleness and seeming Contradictoriness of the Thing or Object, or rather indeed *overballanc'd* in the Conceit of all those who are yet to embrace Faith; that there would be no over-plus of weight left to incline them to hold those Points *True* rather than *False*: much less to make them absolutely hold they are Certain Truths. And, he that should assert the contrary, I wonder how he

would go about to prove it, or by what Standard he would measure whether is the greater of the two counterpos'd Unlikelihoods, *viz.* that the *possibly false* Motive of Faith should hap to be *actually* such, or that the *seeming-Impossibility* in the Objects should chance to be a *real one*. For, 'tis not enough to say here that we are in reason to expect the Divine Nature should be exceedingly exalted above its Creatures, and incomprehensible, and therefore we are not to measure his Perfections by the ordinary Rules found in Creatures, but think it reasonable he should infinitely exceed them: For, however this has weight in Points of Faith which concern the Divine Nature and its Perfections as in it self, yet here it will not serve the turn, in regard Faith teaches us many other Points *seemingly* repugnant to the Divine Nature it self, and most strangely debasing and vilifying it; as, that God, infinitely happy in himself, should be expos'd to injurious Bufferings, Scourgings, and an ignominious Death, for a Creatures sake that, in comparison of him, is a meer Nothing; and that Omniscience and Omnipotence could not invent and pra-

practice some easier and more honorable way to work the End they intended; and, lastly, that it should bescem Infinite Goodness that a Person superlatively innocent should be so severely punished, to do an undue favour to those who were enormously wicked, This consideration, then, necessitates plainly the *Impossibility of Faith's being false*; for else 'twould be irrational to believe it. And lastly, it shews the case of Christian Interiour Acts utterly unparallel to that of Acting Exteriously for sensible and material Goods; which one may apprehend to be attainable; and also comprehend the way to attain them, without puzz'ling his Understanding with any unconceivable mysteriousness in the business to check his Assent.

E're I leave this Point, I must desire the Reader to reflect well on the condition those persons are in who are yet to embrace Faith. They have no Light but their pure Natural Reason, and to this are propos'd for Objects to the one side the Motives to Faith, or the Authority (in our case) that God has spoke it; on the other the strangeness of the Mysteries. Let then those persons understand-

standings no better elevated, go about to scan the profound Mysteries of Faith, 'tis clear, and I think confess by all, they must needs seem to them *Impossible to be True*; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature seemingly *Impossible to be false*, can conquer so as to make them conceit them really *True*. But this Motive or this Rule of Faith is confess by our Adversaries *Possible to be false*; nor (it being a fit and proportion'd Object for Humane Reason) is there any thing to make it seem better than it is, or *Impossible to be false*; 'tis then against all reason to *believe*, were Faith and its Grounds *Possible to be false*; the Motives of Dissent being in that case evidently greater than are the Motives of Assent.

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ty of *Obje-*  
*ctions a-*  
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*Faith.*

§ 10. Again, since 'tis incomparably more easie to throw down than to build, or less difficult for the Understanding to comprehend an Objection, than 'tis to lay orderly in the Soul a severely-connected frame of Discourse forcing the Truth of a Point; particularly, when those Points are utterly unsuitable to Fancy, and even exalted above Reason; and so lie open to very plausible and easily penetrable Objections, on which dis-  
advan-



advantage or disproportion to weak Judgments, (that is, indeed, a high excellency on the Object's side) Atheists ground their drollery against the Mysteries of our Faith : It follows, that were not the chief motives to Faith, or Rule of Faith *practically self-evident*, and, so, *impossible to be False*; there would be, considering the rudeness and unelevatedness of the Generality of those who are to come to Christian Faith, and the unsuitableness of the Mysteries to their fancyled Understandings, greater Temptations and more plausible, (that is, to them stronger) motives laid to make them *dis-sent* to those Mysteries, than to make them *assent*. The motives to Faith, then, must be *Practically self-evident*, and, so, Faith it self must be *Impossible to be False*.

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Seventh Eviction.

S. 1. **P**erhaps the Language and Practice of Christianity, expressing most manifestly their sentiments, may give to some a more natural and penetrable satisfaction, that 'tis *Impossible Faith*

## Faith vindicated.

*Faith should be false; than all the Speculative and Scientifical Proofs hitherto deduc'd.*

From  
Faith's be-  
ing a  
Knowledg  
of God, &  
of his Will

§ 2. For their Language, then, I only hint to the memory of my prudential Readers, (for, to transcribe them were endless) all those Expressions so frequent in Scriptures, Fathers, Councils, and the mouths of the Faithful to these very days, *viz.* That Faith is the *Knowledg* of God, his Will, and of revealed Truths. Nor will I streighten the signification of the word *Knowledg*, to mean Scientifical Knowledg, ('tis neither my *Tenet* nor Interest;) but will leave it at large for any that are concern'd, to explicate *how* this Knowledg is bred: provided they leave the true Nature of *Knowledg*, and do not abusively call that *Knowledg*, which in reality is (when look'd into) *no Knowledg*. Hence I argue; Since 'tis impossible any one should *know* what is *not to be known*; and what *is not*, is *not to be known*; it follows, that the Object of Faith *is*, and so, (here being no contingency in the Matter) *Impossible not to be*; and consequently *Faith*, or the *Belief* of it, *impossible to be False*.

§ 3. Nor am I affraid of those canting  
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Distinctions without sense, that 'tis *Morally a Knowledge*, or that they know it to be *True, morally speaking*. For, if it be expended what is meant by these words [*Morally a Knowledge*]; it will quickly appear, that, as *True Knowledge* can onely be an Effect of the Thing's *Being*: so this Counterfeit Knowledge, call'd *Moral*, falling short of the other, can onely be the Product of the Thing's *Likelihood to be*, and so can onely have for its Object the Thing's *Likelihood*: which, whether it be enough to specific and terminate an Act of Christian Faith, I appeal to the constant Expressions of all who are generally call'd and reputed Christians; and challenge my Adversaries to produce one Expression of theirs, which sounds thus dwindlingly and feebly, as if it meant onely some *high likelihood*, or their apprehension of it as no more but such. Observe but the Life and Energie of their words in such occasions: as that of *Job: Scio quod Redemptor meus vivit*; and that of *S. Paul: Scio cui credidi, & certus sum* &c. and we shall find their Understandings so perfectly possess of the Object's Existence, & not *deeming* onely its Likelihood; that they seem rather to want words

words to express their Absolute Certainty of it. Oftentimes indeed they deny Faith to be *Evidence* or Science, and affirm it to be *Obscure* : but what's this to the purpose ? while all Relyance on Authority is obscure ; and Certain Knowledge can be had by means of Authority, as appears in diverse Instances of *Humane Faith*.

§ 4. Particularly, waving the former, we will reflect on some places more expressly assertive of our Position ; as, that of the Prince of the Apostles, *Acts* 2. 36. *Certissime sciat ergo omnis Domus Israel*, &c. Where, about to bring them to Faith, he expresseth it to be *A most certain Knowledge*, and this Attainable by the *whole House of Israel*, which must mean the Generality at least.

§ 5. I add, (omitting many others) two of his Fellow-Apostle *Paul*. The first, *Col.* 1. 23. *Si tamen permanetis in Fide fundati, & stabiles et immobiles à spe Evangelii* : Now, how any one can be founded or grounded in Faith, if Faith be Possible to be False, that is (*Eviſtion.* 2. § 14.) have no *Foundation*, Principles or Grounds it self ; how any one can be *Stable* and *Immoveable* in a Persuasion, which

which very Persuasion and its Grounds may not only be *moved* but *overthrown* & subverted (as must inevitably follow, if it be *possible to be False*.) I expect to be inform'd by Mr. Tilletson and Mr. Stillingfleet. Do these words sound onely an Exclusion of *Actual Doubt*, or *Suspicion* of it at present, which Protestant Writers make sufficient to an Act of Faith? or rather does it not mean that which of its own nature is such as can admit *no Possible Cause* of Doubt at any time for the *future*? Let them dispense a while with pursuing their affected Gaynesses in the *Out-sides* of words, and take the pains to look into their *Meanings*; and then, if they can make out that *Groundedness*, *Stability* and *Immobility* can consist with *Possibility of falshood*, I shall promise them my utmost endeavour to hold Contradictions with them; for, in that case, those would be the onely Truths.

§ 6. The second shall be that most emphatical one of the same Apostle. *Licet nos aut Angelus de cælo annuntiaverit vobis præter id quod accepistis, Anathema sit.* Though we or an Angel from heaven should preach to you otherwise than you have received,

*seem'd, let him be Accursed.* Which were a very rude and unreasonable carriage (especially for us Christians now adays) were *Faith Possible to be False*, and so, short of the credit due to so Incomparable Authorities : For since 'tis known that many things which have seem'd, (that I may use Mr. T's words) *morally impossible to be False*, have prov'd to be *actually and indeed False*, and 'tis granted that 'tis always *possible to be so* : but it was never heard that an Apostle of *Jesus Christ*, or an *Angel from heaven* could, or at least did at any time preach False : 'tis most manifest that nothing which was *Possible to be false*, can with any reason sustain it self against the force of their Authority; and that Faith, which ought to do so, must be *Impossible to be False*.

From  
Faith's be-  
ing plac'd  
beyond  
Contingencie.

§ 7. From the Language and Sense of the Saints and Christians of former times, let us come nearer home, and see how unsuitable 'tis to the Notions and Expressions of present Christianity, to say, *Faith is possible to be False*. Now, the Possibility of Faith's Falshood, is built on the Contingency of the Motives which are to ground it: for, were there no Contingency in them, but that their Causes

Causes were so laid, that 'twere impossible they should not be Conclusive, they could not possibly fail of being able to conclude; and so Faith would of its own nature be *Impossible to be False*. Considering, then, the Nature of *Contingency*, whether Speculatively in it self, or Practically in Instances wherein 'tis found, we may observe that it implies a certain kind of Proportion between the frequency of Effects on the one side, and the Seldomness on the other: which we usually express by *Ten to one*, a *Thousand to one* &c. If then Faith be *Possible to be False*, its Nature will bear, nay oblige us to express the probable degree of its Likelihood in such kind of Language; and that we assert it to be *likely* in such a proportion, but *not-likely* in a higher: for example, it would be perhaps wise and agreeable to the Nature of the Thing, as thus propos'd, to say, *v. g.* 'Tis a *hundred to one* there is a Trinity, a Heaven or a Hell; but 'tis *not a Thousand to one* that there are any such things. Or, if any contend I have assign'd too-small an over-proportion to Faiths *Likelihood*; yet at least he must grant that, in a greater, it would inevitably follow, that such lan-

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guage ought, in True speaking, be used, when we are to express the *degree* of Faith's Firmness. Wherefore, it being experientially manifest, that nothing sounds more ugly to a Christian ear, than to say, that 'tis *so many to one* Faith is True, but *not so many more* : 'tis evident that the Nature of Faith is plac'd *beyond* all Proportions of its *failing* to its *standing*, and all degrees of Contingency; that is, 'tis *Impossible to be False*.

From the  
manner in  
which  
Christians  
express  
themselves  
when they  
profess  
their Faith

§ 6. Moreover, to say, 'Tis a thousand *to one* Faith is True, or there is a Trinity, is not to say, 'Tis True, or There is a Trinity; Christians, therefore, ought in due candor, then when they are to profess their Faith, express onely how much over-proportion, in a Moral Estimation, its Likelihood bears to its Unlikelihood; and not to stand *telling a Lie*, when they are to make *Profession of their Faith*; saying, 'Tis True, when 'tis onely to such a degree *Likely to be True*; that is, *Lying*, when they should be doing a chief duty of Religion. And, which is worst of all, as being not onely most unwise and imprudent, but most diabolically wicked and impudent, *to stand stiff* in the Profession of that *Ly*, though they hazard the loss of their *Estates*, and even *Lives* too,



by the bargain. Yet, this imputation of such a most foolish and most damnable-dishonest Obstinacy is Unavoidably to be affixt upon Christians, if they thus profess their Faith *True*, in case it be *Possible to be false*; that is, in case it be *only a thousand to one* (for example) *that 'tis True*. If it be said, they saw not perhaps this possibility of Falshood, and so acted virtuously in that Absolute Profession of its Truth, because of their good meaning; the Answer is ready: First, that Mr. Tillotson, Mr. Stillingfleet, and such who maintain, and, so, if they write what they think, see Faith *Possible to be False*, are bound not to profess Faith to be *True*, and to forewarn others not to make such a *Lying* Profession: Next, that if God have commanded us to make such a Profession, as all Christians grant he has; then, not only their *Meaning*, but the *Act* it self is good and laudable. Which, joyn'd to these mens Principles, and their Natural Consequences laid open in our former Discourse, signifies that Dishonesty is Honesty, and a most foolish and wicked Obstinacy a high Virtue, as being commanded by God: Nay, that God is the Author of *Sin*,

commanding them to tell a *Ly* in Professing their Faith *True*. Positions most abominable, as well as contradictory; but 'tis most fit the Nature of all *Goodness* should go to wrack, when the Nature of *Truth* is once violated.

From this,  
that otherwise  
it were law-  
ful to lay  
a wager  
Christian  
Faith is a  
*Ly*.

§ 7. Again, if Contingency have place in Faiths *Basis*, there must be some *stint* of this Contingency, according to the moral estimation of things : be it then, for Example, a thousand to one, or what other proportion you please, for it alters not the present case : If then it be *but* a thousand to one Faith is *True*, then 'tis *One to a thousand 'tis not true*, that is, it will bear a Wager that Faith is a *Ly*; and a Christian, according to these Principles may, without injury to his Faith or its Grounds, and with a great deal of Honesty, *lay a wager* that his Faith is actually *False*. Nay, if he get any one to cope with him at excessive odds; he is bound in Reason and Prudence to undertake him, and lay a wager all Christian Faith is a *Ly*. Which sounding highest Impiety in the ears of all reputed Christians, of what Sect soever, that govern themselves by the Natural conceit they have of Faith; 'tis plain that the Nature  
of

of Faith is plac'd beyond all Contingency of failing, that is, all *Possibility of Falseness*. If it be objected, such a Wager could never be try'd, and so, it could never in Prudence come to be layd : I reply, my Discourse is unconcern'd how able or unable mans Understanding is to decide it, and onely contends that the Nature of the thing, that is, of Faith no better settled, would bear or justify it; which is unavoidably consequent.

§ 8. Particularly, 'tis strange that none of the Christian Martyrs, who from time to time have dy'd for their Faith, should when their life lay at stake, endeavour to mitigate the fury of their Persecutors with such like language. *I beseech you, (Great Nero, or Dioclesian!) understand us Christians right : we deny not absolutely the possibility of your opposit Tenets being true, nor assert our own Faith so far as to say it may not possibly be False. What we profess is onely this, that it seems to us so highly probable, or Morally-Certain, that we have no Actual Doubt of it at present; though we cannot absolutely say but we may come to discover it to be false hereafter, and your opposit Tenets true, and so renounce Christianity and joyn with you : In-*

*From the Carriage of the Martyrs, if suppos'd Honest & Prudent.*

deed we dare venture a thousand to one (or perhaps something more) that our Faith is true; yet for all that we shall not stick to lay one to a thousand 'tis false. These had been moderate and mollifying Expressions, and unquestionless might have sav'd the lives of very many: which why they should not have used, they being (according to our Adversaries Principles) true, and *honest to profess them*, and highly prudent to do it, their lives being concern'd; nay, *Consciencious* too, (for there is none but holds it highly sinful to conceal any Truth which may save another mans life) no other reason can be given but this, that the *Possibility of Faiths falshood* had never enter'd into their hearts; but they held Gods promises of a better life full as Certain, as was their present possession of this, or present determination of losing it for Christ's Name. All their Expressions founded the *Certainty* of the Truth they profess, and their most comfortable Hopes grounded upon that Certainty. Nor did any of the circumstance Faithfull ever judg them too lavish of their blood, for standing so stiff upon their avowing the *rigorous Truth* of their Faith, and the Falshood of its Contradi-

dictory; but always esteem'd their Action no less *Wise* and *Honest*, than it was *Undaunted*. What kind of Profession of his Faith a Protestant, thus principled, would make, in case of imminent Martyrdom, I know not; but I should esteem my self the foolishhest Knave living to tell a ly to hang my self, by professing my Faith *true*, which I could never heartily judg it to be, whilst I held it *Possible to be False*; and so, at best, onely *Likely to be True*.

§ 9 Note here, that I have conceded very much in yeilding a thousand to one of the Likelyhood of Christian Faith in the Protestant Grounds without Traditions *Certainty*, which they deny: rather, taking in the Incredibleness of the Mysteries, it would be (in that Hypothesis) above five to one, speaking modestly, that all Faith is False. For, since 'tis Evident the Certainty of Books cannot be had at all without the Certainty of Tradition; and Protestants deny the Certainty of Tradition, and bring multitudes of exceptions against it (as may be seen in Mr. Tillotson's Answer, or rather Abuse of *Sure Footing*) there is some degree of Incredibleness

in the right Conveyance of Christ's Doctrine hitherto: to which difficulty add the Incredibleness of the Mysteries themselves, exceedingly enhauncing the other; 'tis manifest there would be a high disadvantage on Faith's side. Nay, granting a pretty high Probability (which is perhaps as much, as they care for) yet, the not-onely Improbability, but seeming-Impossibility of the Mysteries of Faith, if taken, not as standing under Authority, but as Objects of our Humane Reason (as in this counter-ballancing case they ought to be) would quite overpoise the Probable motive, and incline the Soul strongly towards Dissent, unless Interest, Custom, or some other Affection come in to the Assistance of the weaker Motive, Printing it in a bigger Letter, and diminishing the difficulty in the Object by not letting it be considered or penetrated, that is, by hindring the working of *Right Reason*. Now, in this case, if this Discourse holds, a Protestant may with a safe Conscience lay odds, and wager two to one at least, his Faith is all a Falshood: A strange Impiety, but yet the natural Consequence of that impious

*Tenet*

Tenet [ *Faith is possible to be False* ] as this is the genuine Sequel of denying the right *Rule of Faith*.

§ 10. The same is deduc'd from the very notion of a *Martyr* and the proper signification of that word, which is to be a *witness*; and this, as appears by his Circumstances, of all *witnesses* the most Solemn and serious, and the perfectest under that Notion that can be imagin'd; as engaging not onely his *word*, but his *Life* and dearest *Bloud* for what he testifies. Now all *witnessing* or Attestation being most evidently of what the Witnesser *knows to be True*, and nothing founding more unnaturally, or being more disagreeable to the nature of that kinde of Action than to have a *Likelihood* for its object, or to witness what he *knows not*, (as will appear by the constant practice of it in all other occasions) it follows that a *Martyr* or *Witness* of the *Truth of Christs Faith*, must know it to be *True*, that is, he must know it to be *more than likely to be True*; and, consequently, (nothing being more Impossible than that one can *know* what *is not*) *Impossible not to be True*, or to be *False*.

From the  
Blasphemousness of  
the Equivalency to  
this Proposition  
Faith is  
Possible to  
be False,

§ II. No less unnaturally would it sound should we gather together, and make use of all the Equivalent Speeches to this Proposition, [*Faith is Possible to be False*] such as are, *There is no Certain way to Heaven. No man knows there is a Heaven, a Hell, a Jesus Christ, a Trinity, &c. No man sees any reason securing Faith from being a lye. The Ground of all our Hope is unstable and may be overthrown. Absolutely speaking it may be there is no such thing as that which Christians are to profess, and ought to dye for. It may be Points of Faith are so many lyes, and false as so many old-Wives Tales. The Light of Faith may be Spiritual Darknes and Errour. What we hold to come from God, the Author of all Truth, may perhaps come from the Devil, the Author of all Lyes. All our Supernatural Truths may be Diabolical Fals-hoods. Faith has no Principles. The Points of Faith are not Truths, but Likelihoods onely. These and innumerable such others, are all Equivalent Periphrases to this Proposition [*Faith is Possible to be False*] as in this Treatise has been manifested; but, how horrid and blasphemous, needs no proof but the*



the bare rehearsing of them.

§. 12. From the Language and Practice of the Generality of the Faithful professing Faith, we come next to the Practice of the *Wits* of Christianity, not proceeding as *Speculators* and *Schoolars* (a most trifling impertinent Topick when we are speaking of Faith, yet most frequently us'd by our Adversaries, especially Mr. *Stillingsfleet*, and Mr. *Pool*, who are obstinately bent to praise that wilful mistake) but as *Christians* or *Faithful*: and this, not only acting or speaking in *Abstraction* from Humane Knowledge, but as in *direct Opposition* to it, and (as it were) in defiance and despight of it. Now, with these intelligent Persons 'tis very solemn, after, by penetrating the Grounds of Faith, they have come to embrace Faith it self, immediately to discard & renounce all *Tenets* opposit to the said Faith, how Certain soever they held them formerly: Nay, to stand with a mind prepared to dissent to any piece of Humane Learning, how Scientifical soever it look't, which they saw evidently to thwart any of those Believed Truths. Making account it was their duty cap-

From the Practice of Learned Christians in captivating their understandings to Faith.

*tivare Intellectum in obsequium Fidei, to captivate their Understandings to the Obedience of Faith, or, to yeild them totally up, by an absolute and perfect Assent to the Truth of those Mysteries; and not to heed or credit any objections or Proposals of Humane Reason to the contrary, when once the stable and immovable Grounds or Motives of Divine Belief, that is, the Rule of Faith, had subdu'd their Judgments to that invincible Assent; but to rest well-assur'd that all reasons were fallacious; and all Positions False which went against those Sacred and Establish'd Truths. This was ever their unanimous and constant Profession; particularly the Fathers are full of Expressions of that kind: An Evident Argument that, as Christians, they ever held Faith and it's Grounds *Impossible to be False*; for, otherwise, they had bin oblig'd, by Honesty and their love of Truth, not to have so readily reject'd their formerly-conceited Truths, nor to have stop'd their ears so obstinately to new Reasons against Faith; but, as long as Faith was *possible to be False*, they ought in due candor to have still weigh'd the*

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Opposit *Thesis* and the Objections perpetually alledg'd, against the strength of Faith and it's Rule, and consider'd which was more likely to be true; and not have still concluded so partially on Faith's side, and obstinately resolv'd to hear nothing against it; bearing themselves as if all must needs be *True* which Faith's Rule teacheth us, that is, indeed, as if *Faith could not possibly be false.*

§. 13. Whence follows, that all who hold Faith is *possible to be false* ought, in Conscience and their natural duty or love to Truth, remain *Seekers* all their Lives: For, however they may *hope at present* that what they adhere to is true; yet, since they hold 'tis *possible to be false* for any thing they know, they ought, the affair and its concern being so weighty, to be still examining it's Grounds, and casting about to see whether this *Possibility of Falshood*, which they already see, be not indeed *Actually* such, though as yet they see it not; or at least, whether some other Profession may not, after long consideration, appear *less possible to be False*, and another still less than that; that so they may go *as near Truth as they*

From the Duty incumbent on the maintainers of the impugnd Tenet to remain Seekers all their lives.

they can: weighing discreetly and impartially what Deism, Paganism, Turcism, and such others, wisely represented without their Poetical Fancies, and Fooleries, can say for themselves. Or, lastly, if they come to such a Scepticism in Religion (which I doubt is the true case) as to judg such a quest lost labour; because, when all's done, the sullen Dame [*Truth*] will never the sooner discover her face, nothing being to be found but what will still appear *Possible to be False*: the Practical Conclusion naturally following hence will be this, to fix there where it lights most advantageous to their temporal Interest; in the same manner as men addict themselves to this or that *Trade*; cry it up and maintain it stoutly to be *Truth*, because 'tis Creditable to the Profession, though they judg all the while it may be a *falsehood*; and, because they see *their Faith* can have no Certain or Firm *Grounds*, undertake to make it good that *Faith* it self needs have none, by the best assistances plausible Rhetorick, seemingly-probable reasons, weak or mis-us'd Testimonies and voluntary Cavils and Mistakes can lend them. And, in a word,

word, since they are not in circumstances to *settle* any thing, to *laugh* heartily at those who go about it, and to endeavour very politicly to pull down every thing; which any Intelligent Reader will manifestly see by this establishing Treatise, compar'd to their performances, to have been the Effects of my Adversaries labours.

§ 14. The Unnaturalness of this *Tenet* will perhaps be brought nearer home, and so be better penetrated even by our Opposers themselves, if we reflect how wickedly it would sound from the mouth of Preachers; if, after a Sermon, exhorting and pressing the Faithful to the *Love of Heaven*, or particularly, *to stand stedfast in their Faith*, they should in the close, to prevent in their Auditors the misunderstanding some overstraining Expressions, add an ingenuous caution, That they should not, for all that, adhere to Faith as if it *could not be False*, nor work for Heaven as if there were any *absolute Certainty* of the being of any such a Thing. Is it not manifest, this (in our case) honest-dealing Profession would enervate the force of all the Motives they had proposed and press'd. And, if so, is it not as evident,

From the inefficaciousness it brings to Christian Preaching and Exhortation.

vident, that all the efficacy of Christian Preaching springs naturally from the *Impossibility that Faith should be False?* For, 'tis not only the Unseasonableness of this Profession, but the Impiousness of it, which would so scandalize the Hearers; and either avert them from the Preacher, or make them cold in Virtue. 'Tis clear, then, that all the forceable Application of Christian Motives to the hearts of the Generality of the Faithful, is grounded on the Impossibility of Faith's Falshood: and that, therefore, he who holds the opposite *Tenet*, and would be honest, should either leave off Preaching, for which this *Tenet* makes him unfit; or else use much caution while he preaches, least, by implying the perfect Certainty of Faith, while he practises Assentation to That, he becomes Injurious to Truth, and consequently to It too, if it be True.

From the  
Churches  
constant  
Practice of  
Obliging  
to Belief.

S. 15. But, to conclude; it has bin no less the Practice of the Governours of the Church, or *Ecclesia docens*, to oblige the Faithfull to beleve what they recommended to them as the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, (Nay Mr. *Whitby*, in his late Treatise [ $\Delta \delta \pi \alpha \varsigma \omega$ ])

page 53, 54. asserts the same of the Church of *England*, as to their *Creed* or *Fundamentals*) Which, had Faith been held by the *Governors* and the *Govern-ed Possible to be False*, had signify'd just thus much, as if the *Governours* should say, *You shall believe it, though we know it may be false*; or, *You shall believe us telling you the Apostles taught it, though both we and the Authority we trusted for it may be deceiv'd, for any thing we know*: And as if the persons governed should answer, *we will believe you, though we know you may be in the wrong, and the Point is self false*; which is in effect the same as if they should profess they are resolv'd to believe them, let it prove what it will, right or wrong, *True* or *False*. So strange a Tyranny in the *Imposers* or *Commanders*, and *Slavery* in the *Believers* or *Obeysers*, as is impossible in either to consist with *Humane Nature*, had not both of them (the *Obeysers* at least) been verily perswaded those *Commanders* had such *Motives* to propose as should have been able to oblige Assent; without which all *Command* of an *Interiour Act* of the *Soul* is *Nonsense* and *Folly*. Oh, but (will a witty *Atheist*

I

say)

say) Humane Policy might have made the Governours conceal the Cheat, by which means the ignorant govern'd were frighted into a belief of any thing! Very likely, indeed, that amongst so many millions, and of those, many *Saints* by our Adversaries own Confession, all should persist and be true Conspirators in so unnatural a Confederacy: or that, in so free an admission of all sorts of prudent people to any kind of knowledg, as is practic'd in Christendom, insomuch that there are found many thousands of the Governed equal in Parts and Learning to divers of the chief Governours, and superiour to very many of them, all should so tamely permit themselves and the world to be abus'd in a Point no less important than their very *Manhood*. 'Tis then above Policy and Force, and only atchievable by the Natural strength of the Motives, to oblige such Multitudes, and so qualify'd, to Christian Faith: and these Motives must have been *Impossible to be False*, none else being able to subdue the Understandings of such a great portion of Mankind to hold their Proposals true, or justify all the Church-Governours in all Ages



Ages from a most unjust and most unnatural Tyranny.

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*Divers Principal Objections  
Answer'd.*

**T**O mistake every passage voluntarily is so in fashion, and so continually pursu'd, as the best method to answer Discourses which proceed by the way of Principles, that, perhaps, it were not imprudent to forestall such Blinds, and prevent such mis-representers from raising their light and airy dust, by acting our selves, if we can, the part of an Opponent after a solider manner than we are to expect from those prevaricating Discourfers: besides, nothing more clears a Point than to manifest that such Objections which aim at the Root of it, quite lose their force while levell'd against it. I recommended this foregoing Discourse, when I had finish'd it, to the perusal of divers of the most judicious and impartial Friends I could pick out; courting their severest candour to

acquaint me with its defects. Their most pertinent and most fundamental Exceptions, I present the Reader with; which I have strengthen'd as well as I could, and added divers of mine own; protesting, that, did I know my self, or knew where to learn of others, more forcible and efficacious ones, I should not have declin'd the proposing them; nor have fear'd to oppose the Invincibility of the Truth I here defend against the strongest Assaults of the most Ingenious, most rational, and most acute Discourfers.

*Objection 1.*

The word *Truth* is both in the *Postulata*, and all over this Treatise taken in too Metaphysical a Rigour: in which sense it may, perhaps, be deny'd that *Faith is True*, or that the Generality of Christians do so esteem it.

*Answer.* I take that word in the plain natural, and proper sense, in which all mankind takes it, for what *in reality* and *indeed is so*; which I affirm to be sufficient for my purpose, or to ground all those Arguments which I bring thence

to evince the Impossibility of Faith's Falshood. But, I fear the Objecter confounds the First operation of our understanding with the Second, that is, our simple Apprehension or Meaning of the word *Truth* or *True* with the Propositions or Judgments made concerning it. For, not only weak people *judg* many things *True* which stand under no Certain Grounds; but even solid men, when the Concern of the Point is sleight, and no circumstance awakes them into a heedfulness; and, as it were, engages their Honesty to speak rigorous Truth; oftentimes carelessly and unconcernedly *admit* Things for Truths which are far short of having Grounds elevating them to an Impossibility of Falshood; and, indeed, are far from being *judg'd* Truths even by themselves while they seem to admit them for such; nay more, though they sometimes *use* them as *Truths*, when the weight is not much whether they be so or no; as when in a *Rhetorical* Discourse, (or even in a *solid* one for Illustration sake) we make use of the Story of the Phoenix, or such like; or when in ordinary conversation we relate many passages abetted by no certain

Authority, but taken upon the account of rumour, perhaps invented by witty humour, the Truth of which it were in those circumstances Imprudent and Impertinent to discountenance, but to let them go with a kind of *Trans-eat*, or a *valcant quantum valere possunt*; Yet, in both cases, what the *solid* man out of unconcernedness *passes*, and what the *vulgar* man out of weakness *judges* as a *Truth*, both the one *passes* the other *judges* to be in *reality* and *indeed* so: whence both of them have the genuine simple Apprehension or *meaning* of the word [ *Truth* ] and the same all other men have, however the one misapplies it, the other permits it to be misapply'd in *Propositions*.

Nor will any distinction of *Truths* *morally speaking*, *probably Truths*, &c. serve the turn; for Truth (as was said) speaks the *Conformity* of the Judging Power to the Thing; that is, a *Real* disposition of the mind: which therefore either *is* or *is not*, in the same manner as the Wall is either *white* or *not white*; not admitting for it's difference *probably* or *not-probably*, any more than *Being* does: But, as it is impossible but the  
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Will if it be not *white*, must necessarily be *not-white*, or have some other disposition in it which is *not-whiteness*; so 'tis impossible but the minde, if not *Conformable* to the Thing or *True*, must be *Un-conformable* or *not-True*; (meaning *not-True* negatively, not privatively so as to signify *False*) and, consequently in stead of that Conformity, it must have some other Disposition in it; whatever that *Disposition* be.

### Objection II.

In some places of this foregoing Treatise *Objective Truth* is confounded with that disposition of the understanding or Conformity of it to the Thing call'd *Formal Truth* or, *Truth in us*.

*Answer.* The clearing this requires the making an exacter discovery into the nature of *Truth*. To do which we will begin our explication with noting that our understanding hath two Operations (omitting the third, *Discourse* as not pertinent to our present purpose) viz. *Simple Apprehension* and *Judgment*. The result or Effect of the first is call'd a *Notion*; Concerning which Phi-

philosophers discourse thus: that, when I apprehend what is meant by the word *Man*, or have that *Notion* in me, *Mans* nature is both in the *Thing*, and in my *Conception*; for 'tis impossible (my *Conception* being an imminent A&) I should conceive what is not in my *Conception*, or that my A& of conceiving should be *intrinsically* determin'd to be *this*, but by what is *intrinsecal* or *in it*. What is meant then by the word [ *Man* ] has two states: one in the thing as existent *out of me*; the other in the thing as existent *in me*: as the self-same figure is in the Seal and the Wax. Yet, neither of these different States enters into the *Notion* I have of *Man*, but merely what is common to the Thing, under either State, which is what answers to the *definition*; for, both *Man*, taken as in himself, is a *rational Creature*; and also what I conceive, or mean by the word [ *Man* ] is *rational Creature*; though the words [ *rational Creature* ] express neither the being *in* my *Minde* nor *out of* it, but abstract from either. By this means my *Mind* conceiving *Man* gains an *Unity of form* with the Thing *out of* it, or a *Conformity* to it: which Disposition

sition wants nothing to be call'd *Truth*, but that 'tis incapable of grounding *Affirmation* or *Negation*; the bare meaning of the word [*Man*] neither implying [*is*] nor [*is not*] Whence Truth and Falshood are usuall said to be incompetent to the first Operation of our Understanding,

We will make way to the Second Operation of our Understanding by another Instance of the first. Imagin then there is propos'd to my Eye a *Round Pillar*; which it affects, and by it my Brain, and, so, my Understanding; it cannot fail to beget there a simple Apprehension, and consequently a Notion of what is directly imprinted; which is, that Thing with as many of its qualifications as were apt to be convey'd in by means of that sense, confusedly blended together; as also (by my Experience that it affects or *is* affecting me) of its *Existence*. Moreover, as Occasion, or indeed Nature guides me, I may have distinct or abstracted notions of Pillar, Roundness and Existence, nay more of Pillar and Roundness as exercising or actually having the same existence; or, which is all one, of what is *means* by this

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Proposition, [*the Pillar is round*] that is, of what corresponds to those three distinct notions, put now in a frame of a Proposition, and, so immediately apt to express Truth or Falshood; and yet not proceed to behave my self affirmingly or denyingly, or *judg* any thing concerning them, but meerly to *conceive* what is *meant* by those words.

Way being thus orderly made towards the Second Operation of the Understanding by disposing the separate notions in a sitting posture by the First; nature seems to require It should supervene; and, so, the Understanding sets it self to *judg* whether those Extream or distant notions, exhibited by the First in the posture of Connexion, be *indeed* connected or no; the standard or measure of which is to be taken from the *Thing*. Now in *self-evident* Propositions and First Principles the Understanding guides it self by that imbred or nature-taught *Principium Intellectûs*; [*The same is the same with it's self*] In *deduc't* Propositions; by the same Principle fundamentally, or originally, and immediately by this, [*Those notions which are the same with a Third, are the same*]



*same with one another,* ] But, in our present Instance, Experience alone suffices to inform the understanding, supposing the obvious knowledg of what *Pillar* and *Roundness* are, and that a *Pillar* is a *Thing*, whereas *Roundness* without *Pillar* is *none*, but onely an Affection or determination of a *Thing*; both known by plain Nature, whatever som Schoolmen speculate. For, these put, meer Experience teaches us that that thing which is call'd *Pillar*, is the same thing which is call'd *Round*, or, which is all one, that in this Proposition, [*The Pillar is round*] the two extream notions are indeed, (that is, with a Conformity to the *Thing*) identifi'd, or that that Proposition is *True*.

But to return home to our purpose: 'Tis clear that *Pillar* and *Roundness* Existing by the same existence or in the same *Thing*, are found in the thing after it's manner, and in my Judgment (or Soul as apt to judg) after it's, that is judgingly: But Truth hath nothing to do with either of these *manners* of Being (as was discours'd formerly in the parallel case of *Notions*) but purely and adequately consists in the *Unity* or *Community* of *Form* which my  
Judg-

Judgment has with the Thing ; by having which in her, the Soul gains a *Conformity* to it. In this Common Form consider'd *as in the Thing*, consists it's *Metaphysical Verity*, or it's *Being what it is* ; and this Verity, consider'd *as apt to stamp or imprint it self on my Judging Power*, is call'd *Objective Truth* ; *as receiv'd in me*, and *fashioning or conforming my said Power to the Thing as in it self*, and so making my Judgment *True* ; 'tis call'd *Formal Truth*.

This declar'd, I deny that I any where confound *Objective Truth* with *Formal*, or what's *in the Thing*, with what's in me *as in me* ; for, that were to identify those two most vastly and most evidently different States : A Supineness too gross for any attentive Discourser to fall into I conceive then what the Objecter would alledge is, that I confound those Truths spoken of with Truth *to us*, or *quoad nos*, as the Schools speak. For, though what's *Truth to us* must needs be Truth *in it self*, and *in us*, in regard we cannot know that to be which *is not* ; yet what's Truth *in it self*, or Truth *in us*, is not therefore Truth *to us*, in regard one may upon *probable*, nay *improbable*, or even *False Grounds*, light upon a right judgment

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ment; in which case his mind as judging, is conformable to the thing or *True*: yet, still, that thing is not true *to him*, in regard he hath no reason able to *conclude* it such; or to make him *see* it to be true. *Truth* then *to us*, is the same with our *Sight* of it; that is, with Certainty or Determination of our Understanding by force of Intellectual Motives; and, this indeed I often seem to confound with Truth in the two former Acceptions; but I therefore *seem* to do it because I am loath to transcribe and apply so often my *Postulata*, and suppose my Judicious Reader bears them in mind. Which if he pleases to understand as subjoyn'd to those Discourses, it will follow that what *is so* in the thing it self, or perhaps *in us*, if it be so severely obligatory to be thus constantly profess and held so, and consequently (by my later *Postulatum*) necessary to be *known* to be so, all my mistaken proofs will be brought to conclude it *True to us*, that is, *Certain*.

You will say, why is it not enough for God to provide that our Acts of Faith be indeed *True in us*, since, so, they would perfect our Understandings by  
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conforming them to the thing; and guide us right; but they must also be *True to us*, or be *known* to be *True*. I answer, for two Reasons. One, because God's Government of Mankind would by this means be preternatural, obliging him to hold, profess, and dye for professing the *Truth* of those Points which he *knows not* to be such. The other Reason is, because every Act of Faith as exercis'd would perpetually involve an *Error*, in case the Motives to those Assents were not conclusive of the Truth of those Points: For, however one may light by hap-hazard, or through weakness on a Truth from an <sup>incon</sup>clusive Motive, yet, since 'tis impossible a rational Creature should assent but upon *some Motive*, good or bad; hence, every Assent practically implies [*'Tis true for this reason*] Wherefore, if the Reason grounding such Assents be unapt to conclude the Truth of the thing, that Judgment necessarily involves a Falshood or Errour; however it be, otherwise, conformable to the thing abstractedly consider'd: <sup>such</sup> Truths then being bastard, illegitimate and monstrous, both the Intellectualness and Supernaturalness of that Virtue call'd  
*Faith,*

*Faith*, make it scorn to own such defective Productions.

*Objection III.*

The *Meanings of Words* are indeed to be taken from the *Vulgar*, but the *Truth of Propositions* is to be taken onely from the Judgments of *Learned Men*: though then that be indeed the *meaning* of the word [*Faith*] which the Generality of Christians mean by it, yet the *Truth* of this *Proposition* [*Faith is possible to be False*] must be judg'd of by the Sentiments of the most Learned Divines; the Generality (at least the Best) of which, and Catholicks amongst the rest, grant the Grounds of Faith as to our Knowledge, and consequently Faith it self, to be *Possible to be False*.

*Answer.* That Maxim is to be understood of those Propositions which require some Speculation to infer them; in which case also even the *Unlearned* are not bound to *Assent* upon the Authority of *Learned men*, taken precisely as men of *Skill*, because generally 'tis Practically-self-evident to them, that such Speculative men differ oft times in their Sentiments,

ments, and they are unfurnisht of due means to discern which is in the right: yet, if they are to *act* in such affairs, they are bound in Prudence to proceed upon the Judgments of that part which is generally reputed *most* and *ablest*; and then their procedure is laudable, because they do the best *secundum ultimum potentia*, or that lies in the power. Whence *Learned* men who have ability to judge of the *Reasons* those Speculators give, behave themselves imprudently and blameably if they even proceed to outward action, meerly upon their Judgments without *examining* the *Reasons* they alleadge, in case they have leasure and opportunity to do so. But now the Maxim holds not all for those Propositions in which 'tis either self-evident, or evident to common and uncultivated Reason that the Predicate is to be connected with the Subject: as 'tis, for example, in this, [*Man is a rational Creature*] or this, which is palpably consequent from the former, [*Man is capable of gaining Knowledge*] for in such as these the natural Sentiments of the Vulgar are full as Certain as those of Speculators; perhaps Certainer. And with the same

Evi.

Evidence the Predicate [*Possible to be False*] must necessarily be seen to be connected with [*Faith*] by all those who esteem themselves oblig'd by Gods Command to profess and dye for the *Truth* of those Points they *believe*. Besides, they hold that Faith makes them *know* God and his Will, that their Assent of Faith is to be *Immoveable*, or adher'd to all their lives; that is, such as cannot be overthrown or shown False by any Reasons brought against it; both which equivalently imply *Impossibility of Falshood*.

Again, 'tis deny'd that Catholick Divines, *even as Speculators*, hold Faith *Possible to be False*; since they all, to a man, (whatever they hold besides) hold the Catholick Church *Infallible*; and that we ought to receive our Faith from her Living Voice and Practice: Now the Tenet of *Infallibility* in the Proposer necessarily draws after it the Tenet of *Impossibility of Falshood* in what is propos'd, that is, in *Faith*. But, because it may be said this is their Sentiment as *Catholicks*, not as *Schoolmen*, let the Angel of the Schools speak for the Schools themselves; his Expressions are common, and so reach all. *Scientia* (saith he, *Sum.*

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*Theol. 2<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>e</sup> q. 1<sup>a</sup> a. 50 ad 4<sup>m</sup>.) cum opinione simul esse non potest simpliciter de eodem; quia de ratione scientiæ est, quod id quod scitur exstimetur Impossibile esse aliter se habere; de ratione autem opinionis est quod id quod est opinatum existimetur possibile aliter se habere: sed id quod fide tenetur, propter fidei certitudinem, existimatur etiam Impossibile aliter se habere.*

And again in the same Question, 2<sup>o</sup>. 4<sup>o</sup>. ad 2<sup>m</sup>. *Ea qua sub sunt Fidei dupliciter considerari possunt: uno modo in speciali, & sic non possunt esse simul visa & credita; alio modo in generali, scilicet sub communi ratione creditis; et sic sunt VISA ab eo qui credit; non enim crederet nisi VIDERET ea esse credenda, vel propter EVIDENTI-AM signorum, vel propter aliquid huiusmodi.*

It were easie for me to avail my self by these Testimonies to confirm the main of my Doctrine; but, what method will permit me, and leads me to at present, is only this, to show that this Great Father of the Church, and Doctour of all Schools, declares the common Sentiment, drawn out of the conceit of Faith's Certainty, to be this, that 'tis Impossible that Points of Faith should be otherwise, or false; and that we must



must, e're we believe, have *Evidence* of the Grounds of our *Belief*, which amounts to the same. All then that can be objected from some of our Divines is this, that they explicate their Tenet so, as *by consequence* Faith is left possible to be false; but, what is this to the purpose; since 'tis one thing to *hold* a Tenet, and another thing to *make it out*. In the former they all agree, in the later (as is the Genius of Humane Understandings where our heavenly Teacher has not settled them) they disagree with one another, sometimes with themselves. Nor, can it bear any Objection, nor breed scandal, that the Ground of Faith should be more particularly and distinctly explicated now than formerly; for, since *Controversie* is a *Skill*, why should it be admir'd, nay, why should it not be expected that it should receive *Improvement*, that is, *better explain* its proper object *the Rule of Faith*; than formerly; since we experience a progress in all other Arts and Sciences which are frequent in use, as this has been of late dayes:

## Objection IV.

A great part of the First Evi<sup>ti</sup>on, in case it proceed concerning *Truth in us*, as it ought, supposes the vulgar Skillful in Logick, and to frame their Thoughts and Assents in the same manner as Artificial Discourfers do.

*Answer.* It supposes no *Skill* or *Art* in the vulgar or Generality of Christians, but onely declares *artificially* what *naturally* passes in rational Souls when they Assent upon Evidence. And this it ought to do; For the Art of Logick frames not it's Rules or Observations at randome, but takes them from the Thing or it's Object (as all other Skills do) that is, from what is found in rational Souls *as rational*, or apt to discourse: by observing the motions of which when it behaves it self rationally, the Logicians set down Rules how to demean our Thoughts steadily and constantly according to right Reason: So that the manner of working in Artificial discourfers in this onely differs from that of Natural ones, that the one acts *directly* the other *reflectingly*.  
For

For example, a vulgar Soul when it as-  
 sents interiorly *a thing is*, or *affirms*, has  
 truly in it what a Logician call's a  
*Proposition*, and that Proposition has truly  
 in it what corresponds to the notions  
 of *Subject*, *Copula*, and *Predicate*; though  
 he reflects not on it, as does a Logician.  
 In the same manner when he gathers  
 the Knowledge of some new Thing, he  
 has truly in that *discourse* of his what  
 corresponds to *Major*, *Minor* and *Con-*  
*clusion*, nay he has practically in him  
 what necessitates the Consequence or  
 that Maxim [ *The same is the same with*  
*it self* ] of whose Truth, it being a Prin-  
 ciple of our Understanding, he cannot  
 possibly be ignorant. Though all this  
 while he reflects not *how* or by virtue  
 of what he acquires this Knowledg.

And hence Light is afforded us to un-  
 derstand in common how the vulgar  
 come to have *Practical Self-Evidence* of  
 divers Truths: For, the Maxims which  
 even scientificall men have of the Ob-  
 jects of several Sciences, being taken  
 from the *Things* or the *Objects* of those  
 Sciences; and (those Maxims being  
*Common* or General ones) from the *ob-*  
*vious* or *common* Knowledg of those  
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things, which the vulgar who convers with them cannot chuse but have; Again, nature imbuing them with the Knowledge of that Principle on which the force of all Consequences is Grounded, as also with the knowledge of all those we call *Principia intellectus*, or *Principles of our Understanding*, hence their rational nature is led directly by a natural course to *see evidently* and assent to divers Conclusions, without any Reflexion or Speculation; which rude but unerring draught of Knowledge is call'd by me in *Sure Footing* and elsewhere *Practical Self-evidence*, because 'tis a natural Result of Practice or ordinary converse with those things; An Instance would at once clear this, and, if rightly chosen, be serviceable to the Readers of *Sure Footing*. An unlearned person that cannot read a word believes fully there was such a man as *K. James*; and that we may not mistake the Question, we will put him to be one that has a handsome degree of conversation in the world. We shide him assent to the Affirmative heartily; But the point is *how* he is led into that Assent, and whether rationally? To ask him a reason *why*, is bootless;

less; for this puts him to behave himself like a Reflector on his own Thoughts, which he is not: whence we shall find him, upon such a question, at a puzzle to give the particular reason; though, as taught by Experience, he will stand stiffly to it in common that he has a reason for it, and a good one too. To help him out then, the way is to suggest the true reason to him, for then he will easily acknowledg it, finding it experimentally in himself; which done, deny the Goodness of it, and you shall find, he will, as taught by nature stand to it, and deliver himself in some rude saying or other in behalf of it. For example, tell him he believes there was a K. *James* because those who pretended to live then have told us so; but what if they were *mistaken*? His answer would in likelihood be to this purpose: *what a God's name were they blind in those dayes, that they could not see who was King then?* Which expresses naturally his conceit of their Inerrableness in such a point, in case they had eyes, which nature taught him men generally have. Insist farther; Perhaps they were not *mistaken*, but had a mind

to cozen all England that came after them. Nature will lead him to this or some such kind of Reply; *To what purpose should they all make fools of every body?* Which words, though rudely exprest, yet couch in themselves the full reason given in *Sure Footing*, as far as 'tis built on Nature. For, first, it implies that man's nature with which he hath a fair acquaintance in common is to do a thing for a *purpose, end* or *reason*. Next, his Interrogatory way is in his rude style, equivalent to a Negative, and so it signifies *there could be no reason* for it; and, lastly, his standing to his former Tenet implies virtually a *Conclusion* from the reason given, that the thing could not be done; which involves necessarily a knowledge of that First Principle on which all force of consequence is grounded; and also of that Principle, *no Effect can be without a due Cause*; both perfectly *suppos'd* and *held* by him, though not exprest in his rude Enthymeme.

From this discourse is collected what this *Practical Self-evidence* is; and, that 'tis distinguish'd from Experience in this, that Experience is onely found of  
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what uses to make the *Minor* in this virtual discourse, but Practical Self-evidence is of Conclusions deduc't (as it were) from a common maxim naturally known, as the *Major*; and a *Minor* (for the most part) experientially, or else Practically known; which, joyn'd with the Self-evident Principle in which the force of Consequence consists, make up that virtual discourse. Again, it differs from *Science*, in that a man of Science reflectingly sees a *Medium* identifying the two Extreames, and is aware of the virtue of those Causes which beget Evidence; whereas the other is rather Passive from Natural Impressions than Active by any Self-industry in these Knowledges, and rather *feels* the force of those Causes in his own Adhesion, than *sees* it. Secondly, 'Tis collected that this *Practical Self-evidence* is notwithstanding, *True Knowledge*; though, perhaps, it be the sleightest kind of it, in which 'tis differenc't from *Opinion* built on probabilities. For, seeing such Assenters have both by Experience or by Common Conversation *true Knowledge* of the natures of diverse things in common, which make the *Minor*, as also by Nature

Nature of all the Principles of our Understanding, which countervail the *major*, and force the Consequence; it comes to pass that this Practical Self-evidence is intirely and adequately grounded on *true Knowledges* both as to Premises and Consequence; and consequently 'tis it self a *True Knowledg* likewise. Which consideration will help to explain my later *Postulatum*, and shew by what means 'tis possible all Christians may *know* their Faith to be *True*, or the same the Apostles taught, by the Churches *Testimonie*, because they know the Inerrableness and Veracity of vast and grave multitudes in open matters of Fact which are practiceable daily. And lastly, 'tis collected that what is *Practically Self-evident* to the *Unlearned*, is *Demonstrable* to the *Learned*: in regard *These* are capable of seeing by what virtue the causes of this Self-evidence bred that *Knowledg*, which the other's incultivated Reason would give no account of.

#### Objection V.

That first Principle [*Every thing while it is, is necessarily what it is*] seems to be often-



oftentimes misapply'd, particularly E-  
 vict. 2. § 11. & 13. to *Truth at present* ;  
 whence the Arguer would conclude that  
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 put those Motives which only he had  
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 prove the Point true and false both or at  
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*Answer.* I mean in those places Truth  
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Nature of all the Principles of our Understanding, which countervail the *major*, and force the Consequence; it comes to pass that this Practical Self-evidence is intirely and adequately grounded on *true Knowledges* both as to Premises and Consequence; and consequently 'tis it self a *True Knowledge* likewise. Which consideration will help to explain my later *Postulatum*, and shew by what means 'tis possible all Christians may *know* their Faith to be *True*, or the same the Apostles taught, by the Churches *Testimonie*, because they know the Inerrableness and Veracity of vast and grave multitudes in open matters of Fact which are practiceable daily. And lastly, 'tis collected that what is *Practically Self-evident* to the *Unlearned*, is *Demonstrable* to the *Learned*: in regard *These* are capable of seeing by what virtue the causes of this Self-evidence bred that *Knowledge*, which the other's incultivated Reason would give no account of.

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*Answer.* I mean in those places Truth  
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the world, or as if *True, False, Certain* and *Uncertain* could be relative to one person only. First, then, my Position is that, whoever puts a thing *True* to himself, yet possible to be *False* to another, puts no less a capacity of the thing's being at once thus *True* and *False* though in several Subjects, than as if it were in one Subject only. Next, he supposes each of those different Judgers to have possibly just Grounds for so judging, since he puts in one Motives sufficient to evince the *Truth* of the thing, in the other, possible ones to conclude it's *Falsehood*. For our Question is not, to what degree weak Souls can miscarry in assenting, but what degree of strength is found in the *Motives* to Faith; which, the Objecter, as a *Christian*, that is, as a *Holder* that Points of Faith are *Truths*, must affirm to be sufficient to conclude it *True*; and yet, as himself contends, leaves it still possible to be *False*; that is, proveable by other Grounds to be so; for, else, the word *False*, cannot mean *False* to us, or in the Subject, as is pretended; that is, he must make it possible to be justly or in right reason, held by one *True*, by the other *False*. Now 'tis the Impossibility of

of such opposite Grounds I constantly maintain; or that the Grounds of Faith are *Impossible to be False*. Thirdly, hence I go farther and urge, that, if those different Motives can oblige justly one man to hold Faith *True*, the other to hold it *False*; then, putting them in the same man, it ought to oblige him to hold both sides of the Contradiction: and this enforces my proofs of this nature in my Third Eviction. I know it will be readily answer'd, that this will not follow; because, the Motives being disparate, the more probable one would, when in the same subject, over-power the other, and so hinder the opposite Assent. But I desire it may be consider'd that Intellectual Motives or Reasons have their power to *bind* the Understanding to Assent, not from their relation to other extrinsecall Proofs corresponding or discorresponding with them, but from the Truth of the Premisses on which they intrinsecally depend, and the Goodness of the Consequence; and, finally, by virtue of their being built on first or self-evident Principles. If then the Motives one man has at present be sufficient of their own nature to oblige him, acting according

ing to right reason, to judge Faith True, who ever has humane Reason *ought* to assent upon them: and, if Faith be still possible to be *False*, that is, *False to us*; that is, be *possible to be shown False*, or possible that others may have *just ground* to hold it so, put those Grounds also in the *same* man, and, since they must be convictive of humane understanding, they ought to have their formal Effect where they are; that is, convince it of Faith's Falshood too; which however absurd, yet 'tis the genuine and necessary sequel of this Source of Absurdities, *viz. That Faith and its Rule may possibly be False*. How the force of this Discourse is avoidable but by alledging that no man acting according to right reason has just grounds to hold his Faith *True to us*, or can ever have just Grounds to hold it *False to us*, (which is to deny the Possibility of Faith's Falshood to us, the Opposers own position) I profess myself utterly unable to discern. Now, he that holds these Positions is a perfect Sceptick or a Pyrrhonian as to matters of Religion; since he puts an absolute desperateness of knowing the Truth on either side, in that matter or subject.

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## Objection VI.

When 'tis said that *Faith and its Rule may be False*, the Arguer misunderstands it to mean that we assert it may *actually* and indeed be *shown* so, whereas 'tis only meant by those words, that 'tis *Possible to be False for any thing we know*; or, for any thing the Grounds of Faith as to our knowledge, evince or force to the contrary.

*Answer.* I know not what Possibility to any thing means, if it be not a relation to its being *actually and indeed*: nor a Possibility of being *False to us*, but a Possibility of being *actually and indeed* such; that is, of being *actually shown so to us*. And all this must be forcibly admitted by him who puts *no proper or necessary Causes* in the *Thing*, nor consequently *Conclusive Motives* in mens *Understandings* why this Faith now profess should necessarily be the same Christ and his Apostles taught. 'Tis indeed a different thing to say, *it may be so*, and to say, *I do not know but it may be so*. But, he who maintains that *Faith may possibly be False*, if he be honest, knows what he maintains to be *True*; otherwise, cer-  
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cainly he were very wicked who would thus disgrace or diminish Faith, if he did not know his Position to be a Truth; whence follows that such a man must not onely say, *I know not but it may be False*; but he must, if he will speak out what he thinks, be oblig'd to say, *I know it may be False*; however he be loath to declare Categorically and sincerely his Tenet in so odious a Point, or hazard his credit with the Generality of Christians! whose Sentiment he contradicts so expressly.

#### Objection VII.

'Tis enough that Faith be as Certain as that the Sun will rise to morrow, that *America* will not be drown'd, as that there was a *Henry* the Eighth, &c. which are onely *Morally Certain*, and enough for humane action, since they exclude *Actual Doubts*, or leave no suspicion of doubts behind them; which as *Mr. Stillingfleet* tells us, App. p. 76. is the highest actual Certainty which the mind of any reasonable man can desire. In the same manner as it is Certainty enough for me to use my house that I am morally certain it will  
not



not fall on my head, though I have no Absolute Security but it may. And this kind of Certainty seems more suitable to *Mankind*, being more easily penetrable by the Generality than the other rigorous and over-straining Certainty; which seems more fit and proper for the higher sort of Speculators, than for a *world* of men, which comprehends capacities of all degrees and sorts, and the greatest part of them, perhaps, of little Learning.

*Answer.* The Objecter must prove that all those Instances are only-Morally-Certain or *Possible to be False*, e're he alledge them for such: That of *Henry the Eighth*, which does indeed oblige the understanding to belief, I affirm to be *Practically Self-evident* and demonstrable, and so *Impossible to be False*. As for the rest, they are utterly unfit to parallel *Faith's Certitude*, being all of *material* things, whose very *Essence* is to be *mutable*; whereas Points of Faith, being *Truths*, and in matters not subject to Contingency, are *essentially* incapable of being otherwise than they are, that is, *still Truths*: So that far easier is it that all material nature should undergo all the Changes

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imaginable, than that any such Truth can *not be it self*, or the Principles on which 'tis built in us desist to be *True or Conclusive*. In particular, I would ask whether it be enough for Faith to be as Certain to us Christians, as it was to those immediately before the Flood, that the whole world should not be drown'd, which exceeds the case of *America's* possible destruction; or, as it was to those after the Flood, that the Sun should never stand still or go back; or, lastly, as it is that a house, of whose Firmness none had actual doubt, should fall? If so, then the *Standing* of the Sun in *Joshuah's* time, and it's *Retrogradation* in *Ezekiah's*, show the unparallelness of these Instances. You'll say these were both miraculous. But, this alters not the case; first, because it was never heard, nor can it be held by any sober man, that even *Miracle* can make such *Truths, Falshoods*; or those *Motives*, which are of their own nature able to conclude the *Truth* of any such Points, *Inconclusive* or Invalid. Next, because, if the *Motives* to Faith, and so *Faith* it self are *Possible to be false* for any thing we know, 'tis Impossible to give a satisfactory Answer to a Deist, demand-

manding how, in case they should prove *indeed* False, we can be assur'd Gods Goodness to Mankind will not step in even *miraculously* to discover the vanity of so universal an Illusion, and the Abuse of Falshoods so absurdly imposing upon the world, as to obtain the highest repute of Sacred and Divine Truths.

Concerning the last Instance of the Moral Certainty of a houses standing, which hath been objected to me by learned Protestants, as sufficient to make me act as steadily and heartily as if I had a Demonstration that it would not possibly fall, besides the General Answer that Points of Faith are *Truths*, which renders the case unparallel, I reply, that the two houses, *the one in Holborn*, the other in *Kings Street*, which of late years, & a third in *Cock Lane*, which of late days fell, when none had the least *actual doubt* or *suspicion of doubt* of it, else surely they would never have staid in them, inform us sufficiently to what a changeable, tottering and ruinous condition Christian Faith would be reduc'd by these Principles and Parallels: No fewer than three Houses fell in the compass of a short time, and none had the least *suspicion of*

*doubt* beforehand of such an Event; therefore, may an Atheist say, *Down falls Christian Faith too*, whose Foundation was (by this Doctrin) but Parallel for strength to the other; or, if it fall not in so long time, it has only something *better luck*, not *better grounds* than had the three Houses.

As for the objected *Unsuitableness* of such a Certainty as I require, 'tis reply'd, that nothing is more natural for the Generality of Mankind, than to be led by Authority; nothing more penetrable by those of all sorts than the Infallibleness and Veracity of exceedingly vast and grave Authorities relating matter of Fact, as we experience in their beleeif that there was a *Q. Elizabeth* and such like; to *comprehend* and *assent immovably* to which costs them not the least over straining, as the Obiecter imagins. Which being so, I make account that God both in his power and wisdom *could*, & in his Goodness *would* render the Authority of his Church, *the Ground and Pillar of Truth*, as evident to all her Children, both as to its Inerrableness and Veracity as the other; nay incomparably more, it being in every regard so requisit.

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*Objection VI.*

If the Motives to Faith must be *Impossible to be False to us*, they would necessarily conclude the *Truth* of Faith; wherefore they would, of themselves, *oblige* the Understanding to assent, and so there would need no precedent *pious affection* of the Will; which yet both Councils, Fathers, and Catholick Divines with one consent require. Nay, more, were not such a pious affection put, Acts of Faith would not be *Free*.

*Answer.* If Experience teaches us that even assent to Humane Sciences, though *Evident* from Intrinsic reasons, *Comprehensible* by our Understanding, and purely *Speculative*, is not to be acquir'd without an affection to see Truth; as is evident from the carriage of meer Scepticks, who having entertain'd a conceit of it's *hopelesness*, come thence to want Love or Affection for it, and so never come to see it, how *Conclusive* soever the reasons be. Much more by far must some good affection be pre-requisite to assent to Divine and Super-

natural Truths, which are *Obscure* in themselves, as depending upon Authority; *Incomprehensible* to our natural reason; and *Practical*, that is obligingly-Efficacious to break out into Christian Action or Love of Heaven above all sub-lunary things, as *True Faith* must be. The First obstacle of the three mention'd has this difficulty, that the beams of Truth, which come directly from the things themselves are generally apt to strike our Understanding more naturally, penetrate it more deeply, and to stick in it more immovably, than those which are reflected to us from the Knowledge of another, such as are Points of Faith; besides the new difficulty of seeing the *Veracity* of the *Attester*, which, how evident soever it be, yet it puts the Understanding to double pains; whereas, Evidence had from the *Thing* is but a *single* labour, and so less confounding and distracting the thought.

The Second Obstacle, *Incomprehensibleness* is apt to stupify the Understanding and retard Assent; nay even to deter it from *considering* them as *Truths*; The Atheistical temper of the world (which could not subsist were Metaphysicks

sicks duly advanc'd) sufficiently informs us how difficult it is for men to apply and fix their thoughts upon those considerabilities in things and those natures which are *abstracted from matter*; the reason whereof is, because it being natural that our Fancy be in act while our Understanding is so, and there being not *Proper Phantasms*, (the onely agreeable ones to material men, who are not strong enough to guide their Judgments purely by Principles and Connexions of Terms) which sute to such abstracted Conceptions, but *Metaphorical* ones onely, which the Understanding must in rigour deny to be right ones, even while by necessity 'tis forc'd to make use of them; Hence the life of a Christian, as such, being to *serve God in Spirit and Truth*, and, so, the Objects and Principles of his new Life for the most part and principally *Spiritual* ones, it comes to pass that for this very regard alone, there will need a great love of Truth and Spiritual Goods to make the Understanding appliab'le to them, or even admit a consideration of them. I was told by a worthy Friend of mine that discoursing with an acute

man, but a great hater of Metaphysics, and mentioning a *Spirit*, he in a disgust broke out into these words [ *Let us talk of what we know.* ] By which expression 'tis manifest that he mistook the Question *An est*, for *Quid est*; But what makes for my purpose is, that the *unknowableness* of the Essence or nature of a Spirit to us in this State, obstructed even his *desire to consider* whether there were any such thing or no; & consequently that there needs a contrary desire or affection to know Spiritual things, to make us willing even to entertain a *thought* of their *being*, much more to *conceit* it. But incomparably more needful is such an Affection, when to the *Spirituality* of those points there shall be added an *Incomprehensibleness*, nay, if onely those points be consider'd, an *Incredibleness*; when no *Parallel* can be found in Nature, nor scarce any *similitude* weakly to *shadow* out the thing and it's possibility; nay, when some of those points directly *thwart* the course of *natural Causes*, whence all our other Knowledges have their *Stability*. Then, I say, if ever there is requirit an Affection for the  
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Nobleness and Excellency of those high Spiritual Objects, to make us willing to hearken to any Authority proposing them, how evident soever the Motives be for the Credibleness of that Authority.

The third Obstacle follows, taken from the *End* for which Faith is essentially *ordin'd*, that is, from what it essentially is, *viz.* a mover of the Will to *Virtue* and Goodness, or a *Practical Principle*. Now, nothing is more evident than this Truth, that by-affections and contrary inclinations are apt to hinder the understanding from assenting, or even attending candidly and calmly to these Reasons, (how clear soever they be) which make against any beloved Interest; whence, there needs a *contrary affection* to these other, to remove the mists those passions had rais'd, and purge the Eye of the Mind, that so it may become capable of discerning what it could not before, though in it self most visible. How much more, (not only requisite but even) necessary must some *pious affection* be to permit the mind freely to embrace the doctrine of Christian Faith, containing Principles which enjoin a disregard and

and poſthabitation of all that is ſweet to Fleſh and Blood, nay even of Livelihoood and Life it ſelf.

'Tis moſt manifeſt then that a *Pious Affection* pre-requiſit to Faith, derogates nothing from it's *Certainty*, but is perfectly conſiſtent with the *Evidence* of thoſe Motives which are to generate it; and that the Governours and Officers of the Church, though propoſing the moſt convincing reaſons in the world for the Authority conveying down Faith to us, can prevail nothing, unleſs the Great Governour of the world and Giver of every good gift, by his peculiar Power, plant antecedently in their hearts this good diſpoſition, and prepare *terram bonam*, that their endeavours may take effect, and the Sowers Seed take root; no more than *Paul*, though *miraculous*, could convert all that ſaw his Miracles or heard his Preaching, but only ſuch whoſe hearts God open'd as he did *Lydia's*. It appears alſo by the ſame diſcourſe how the Acts of Faith are *free*, that is, as depending on this pious diſpoſition of the Will, which ſets the Underſtanding on work to conſider the Motives, and ſo produce them. The whole Human

man's Action is *free*, because the Will orders it; though she do not produce it all, or though freedom be not formally in the Body: so the Act of Faith is *free*, because it is order'd by the Will which is *free*; though no freedom be found in the Understanding, which is incapable of such a qualification, but pure necessity of assenting when the Motives are seen to be Conclusive.

No need then is there upon any account of a *pious disposition* of the Will to pece out the defect of the Reasons why we believe, and to oblige the Understanding to assent beyond the Motive; that is, assent, to a degree, beyond what it had reason to do. An Impossibility in Humane Nature rightly and connaturally govern'd, and (I much fear) no small disgrace to Christian Faith; considering the obstinate bent of the Church's Adversaries to confound the Speculative Thoughts of Divines, explaining Faith and its Grounds less carefully, with their Sentiments issuing naturally from them as Christians, nay with the Doctrine of the Catholick Church it self. What can revincingly be reply'd to an Atheist, objecting on this occasion that Christians

ans make the *Evidence* of Faith's grounds stand need to be pecc'd out by *Obscurity*; our *Knowledg* of them by *Ignorance*, and the *Rationality* of them by *will without Reason*, that is, *Willfulness*. Wherefore I earnestly obtest and beseech, even *per viscera Christi*, all who shall read this Treatise, and yet have *Speculatively* held and maintain'd this Opinion I here impugn, (for *practically*, and as *Christians*, they hold the contrary Conclusion) seriously to weigh the Point once more, and not to obstruct the Resolving Christian Faith into immoveable Principles, or absolutely Certain Grounds, by an Opinion onely sprung from the conceited difficulty in making out those Grounds to be *Impossible to be False*; which yet themselves to a man profess and hold, as they are *Christians*. I humbly beg leave to propose to them these few Considerations: First, 'Tis Certain Faith is no less Faith, or an Assent upon Authority, though that Authority be demonstrated to be Infallible: but on the contrary, that 'tis both *firmer* and *more rational* even for that very regard. Secondly, 'Tis Certain that the Generality of Christians hold their Faith to be  
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True, or Impossible to be False, (that is, 'tis *True to us*) and withall perfectly Rational, and consequently that its Grounds or Principles are so able to ascertain it that they place it beyond Possibility of Falshood. Thirdly, 'Tis no less evident that, an inclination or motion of the Will, being of such a nature that it can have neither Truth nor Falshood in it, can be no Rational Principle or Ground of our Assents or Acts of Faith; that is, apt to ascertain them, or indeed apt to establish the *Truth* of any Tenet. Fourthly, That 'tis most evident from my foregoing Discourse, that an antecedent pious disposition of the Will is still requisite to Faith, notwithstanding the perfect Conclusiveness of the Grounds on which 'tis built; and, that all Acts of Faith depend on this *quoad exercitium* at least, (as the Schools speak) which in the Judgment of many Divines is sufficient. Fifthly, That 'tis the common Opinion of the solidest Divines, that *Faith consists with Evidence in the Attester*. Sixthly, That Faith or a firm and immoveable Assent upon Authority, is not *thoroughly rational*, and by consequence *partly faulty*, if the Motives be not *alone*  
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able to convince an Understanding rightly dispos'd, without the *will's* Assistance; for, what can be said for that degree of Assent which is *beyond* the Motive or Reason? Is it not evident from the very Terms that 'tis *Irrational* or *without any Reason*? But, the worst is, that, whereas all good Christians hold their Faith *Impossible to be False*, or judge their Acts of Faith *Immoveable* Assents, these Authors as Speculators put all the Reasons for Faith to leave it still *Possible to be False*, and make this *pious Affection* the only thing which elevates it to *Impossibility of Falshood*, which is *vastly higher* in point of *Certainty*; as if a rational Creature, not deviating totally from its nature, but acting according to right Reason, ought *therefore* to hold a Point *Impossible to be False*, because it self has an *Affection*, or (as we say) a *great mind* it should be so. Seventhly, This Assertion renders the Impossibility of Faith's Falshood, not only *unmaintainable*, (as hath been now shown) but also *unperswadable* to others; for, how shall I be able to give account to others that my *Affection* which works this *Perswasion* in me is *rational*, and not apt to mislead me, when

when as the very Position obliges me to profess the contrary, and to grant that this Affection pushes forward my Understanding to assent *beyond the reason it has*, that is, *as to this degree in my Assent*, (which is no small one since it raises it from judging Faith possible to be false, to judge it Impossible to be such) *without reason*? Or, will not this Speculative Tenet seem to force this Inference, that the Grounds of Faith, as to its most intrinsecal consideration, viz. the Impossibility of its Falshood, is made by this Doctrine full as dark a hole as 'tis to alledge *the private Spirit*? Nor can the Reverence due to the Divine Authority suffice for such an Effect; both, because 'tis Impossible God should will that *Mankind* for his sake should act *irrationally*; as also, because there is no poison in the world so pestilent as an Errour abetted by the most Sacred Patronage of God's Authority, as the Histories of the Fanatics in all ages, and our home-bred experience testifies. Whence, that very Reverence to the Divine Authority obliges us to be so *sure* 'tis engag'd for a Truth ere we admit it for such, that we may securely though with an humble  
Truth

truth say with *Richardus de Sancto Victore, Domine, si error est quod credimus, à te decepti sumus*; so that there is indeed no greater injury and abuse to the Divine Name imaginable, than to hazard the making it patronize *Falshoods*: against this deceit our Saviour hath fore-arm'd us, by his fore-warning us with a *Nolite credere*, when any one pretends, *Loe here is Christ, or there is Christ*.

Lastly, 'tis visible to any indifferent understanding, that those Divines who defend this influence of the *pious Affection* upon the settling of Faith's Certainty, though in other Points very rational and acute, yet when they come to this, they are at an utter loss, and can make nothing cohere. *Philippus de Sancta Trinitate* contradicts himself twice or thrice in one leaf while he attempts to defend it. But, I instance in one for all, that is, Father *Vincentius Baronius*, a Doctor of *Tholouse*, and of the Holy Order of *S. Dominick*; a Person of as much Eminency, Gravity and Learning as any of late dayes. This Great Writer in his *Manuductio ad Moralem Theologiam*, p. 130, 131. falls upon *Caramuel* in these words, *Distinguit Caramuel duplicem honesta-*



*nestatis Certitudinem seu veritatem; formalem unam vocat, alteram objectivam; istam negat cuilibet opinioni probabili, illam concedit, &c. ---- Sed hoc nobis ignorantie prodigium est aut temeritatis, dari veritatem aut falsitatem, certitudinemque cui nulla Objectiva corresponsdeat; Hoc ne deo quidem concessum est, ut Scientiam habeat rei non scibilis, i. e. veritatem formalem rei quæ objectivâ careat.* Yet the same Author, p. 271 is forc'd, by the defence of this ill grounded Tenet which he had espous'd, into the same paralogysm which he had so gravely, severely and learnedly reprehended in another. Where putting the Objection very home, he asks, *Si prævium illud ad Fidem Fudicium sit intra probabilitatis fines, quâ ratione poterit mens assurgere in assensum illo seu opinione firmiorem? ergo fidei Certitudo nutlat si ab illo Fudicio, quod prudenter probabile dixi, pendeat, nec aliunde repetatur:* This done acknowledging that tota Controversia & fidei summa is contain'd (as indeed it is) in this argument, he addresses himself to answer it. First sleightly by an example, that this precedent Judgment is to Faith as Accidental Alteration to the Substan-

tial Form, and so being onely a disposition to it may be less noble or Certain than Faith is it self; whereas, if our Assent of faith ought to be thoroughly rational, this previous Judgment being that on which this Assent is built, *as to us or as to our knowledg*, must at least be *Firm and Immovable* it self, since the Assent of Faith built on it ought to be *such*, and consequently beyond Probability; whence the example is most unsuitable; signifying that as Nature disposes matter by imperfect degrees towards a perfect and ultimate Effect, so *infirm Principles* may rationally beget a *firm Assent*. After this, he alledges that *the Certainty of Faith is to be fetch't from God the Authour of it, who infuses Light and gives most efficacious strength to beleeve*. But the question is whether God ordinarily and abstracting from Miracle infuses Light into *rational* Creatures, but by means of motives or reasons; and whether it requires such *strength*, or rather be not an unwise Credulousness, that is a great *weakness*, to beleeve beyond what we have reason to do, and so unworthy God the giver of every good and perfect gift. Lastly, he affirms

fi/ms that the Certainty of Faith is to be fetch't from the pious Affection of the will, *qui mentem rebus credendis indubitato & immoto assensu alligat quasi nodo indissolubili*; Which, as it were by an indissoluble Knot, ties the mind to the things to be believ'd with an undoubted and unmov'd Assent. But, the question is how this knot is indissoluble, in case the probable reason prove false, unless the Soul be wilfully blind; or why a resoluteness in the will can rationally establish a true Intellectual Certainty. What I chiefly conclude from these answers of his is, that he perpetually waves Certainty had from the Object, and so unavoidably is forc't to put a formal Certainty in us, to which no Objective Certainty corresponds; which his excellent wit in another circumstance saw to be prodigiously faulty, and a Certainty (that is a perfection) not competent even to God himself. So Impossible 'tis that Errours prejudicing the Rule of Faith should not either by Opposition to First Principles be discover'd to be Falshoods, or, by self-contradictions in their maintainers, confess it themselves.

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*Objection VII.*

'Tis manifest that diverse *weak* people assent upon very Inconclusive, nay silly, or less than probable Motives; whom yet no sober man will deny have *saving Faith*; the *true nature* of Faith then requires not necessarily motives *Impossible to be False*, or that Faith be True to us, but may be *without* any such qualification.

*Answer.* When we say *Faith is Impossible to be False*, we take the word [*Faith*] in its proper and primary signification; now, that being the *proper* signification of a word that is *most usual*, and that most usual which is found in the *Generality* of the users of it, the proper signification (that is the true nature) of *Faith* is that which is found in the generality of Christians; which being evidently an Assent to be adher'd to all one's life, to be dy'd in, and dy'd for, and the Object, or Form of that Assent being *Truths*; and, so, it self *True*; 'tis most manifestly, in each of those regards, imply'd that it must be *Impossible to be False to us*, or to the Generality,

nerality of Christians; that is, it must have Grounds *able* to show it, may actually *showing* it so to them, whatever Contingency may happen in a few particulars for want of applying to them the right Rule of Faith. Besides, Faith must be a *Knowledge* of Divine things, a *virtuous Act*, and, so, *rational*; and a most efficacious Cause of working for Heaven: Also, *its* Grounds must be apt to establish the most Speculative Faithful, to convert or confound the most acute Wits denying or opposing it, &c. all which and much more is prov'd in the First discourse of *Sure Footing* by arguments as yet not attempted to be invalidated by any; however something hath been offer'd against those Conclusions: Which Attributes it cannot possibly justify, nor yet perform those Offices, without being *True to us*, or having Grounds *Impossible to be False*. The word [Faith] then, apply'd to those weak persons now spoken of, signifies not the same as when 'tis found in the Generality of Assenters; but, merely, a simple credulity of any thing told them by a person that looks seriously when he speaks it, and is conceited by

the Believer to be wiser, or to have heard more than himself. Which kind of Assent, if it be seconded by favourable circumstances laid by God's Providence, especially by such means as are found in the Discipline of the Church, so as it begets a love of Heaven above all things, may suffice to save those weak and well meaning Catholicks. But, how incompetent an Assent no better grounded were for the establishment or propagation of Christianity; that is, how insufficient for the *Body* of the Faithful or the *Church*; how unfit for the Ends, and unable to produce the Effects *true Faith* (or the Faith found in the *Generality* of the *Faithful*) ought to do, needs no declaration to manifest it; since no person of ordinary capacity can without difficulty refrain from smiling at the ridiculous levity of such kind of Assenters.

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## INFERENCES

*From the foregoing Discourses  
concluding all Con-  
troversy.*

1. **I** Trests, then, evinc'd and demon-  
stratively concluded, with as great  
Firmness, as First Principles made  
use of for Premisses, and Immediate Con-  
sequences from those Principles can esta-  
blish it, that, that most firm or Unchan-  
geable Assent call'd *Christian Faith*, lay-  
ing an obligation on its Professors to as-  
sert it with the greatest Seriousness,  
Constancy and Pledges imaginable, to be  
TRUE, and its Object, *Points of Faith*, to  
be TRUTHS, is not possible to be False to us,  
that is, to be an *Erroneous Judgment*, or a  
*Mistake* of our Understanding,

2. 'Tis with the same Certainty con-  
cluded, that the *Ground of Faith* as to our  
Knowledge, and, so, the *Rule of Faith*,  
must be likewise *Impossible to be False*.  
For, since nothing can or ought in true  
Reason be *Stronger* than the *Ground* it

stands on, if *This* be not *Impossible to be False*, it can be *no Rule of Faith*; because it would weaken *Faith* it self, which is built on it, into a *Possibility of Falshood*, inconsistent with its nature.

3. It follows with the same Clearness, that, if the Rule of Faith, or the Immediate Means to convey the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrin to us, be any *Living Authority*, that Authority must be *Infalible*, as to that Effect. For, if *Fallible*, Faith which is built on it would still be *Possible to be False*. As, Likewise, that, if it be any Book, both the *Letter* of that Book must be known to be *Impossible to have been corrupted*, as to what concerns Faith built on it; and withall, the *Sense* known to be *Impossible to be mistaken*. For, in case either of these (all the Causes being put to preserve them such as we have said) be truly judg'd or found to be *Possible*, Faith, which is to depend on them, will still be left *possible to be False*.

4. It follows immediately, that those pretended Faithfull, who have not Grounds of Faith thus qualify'd, have no true Faith; that is, no Act of *Belief*, but what, notwithstanding all that they know, or can know of it, *may possibly be False*:



*False*: nor, consequently, are they to be accounted *truly Faithfull*, as not having *true Faith* (that is, in our case, an Assent built either on *Infallible Living Authority*, or on unumistakeable Letter and Sense of a Book, § 3.) but *Opinion* onely.

5. It follows with like Evidence, that, a Controvertist being one who is to assert Faith, not by looking into the *Mysteries* of Faith and explaining them, (this being the Office of a School-Divine) but into the *Motives* to it or *Rule of Faith*, if he goes not about to bring Proofs which he judges and is ready to maintain, nay, which are of their own nature apt to shew Faith and its Rule *Impossible to be False*, he does not the duty he owes to Faith, nor behaves himself like a Controvertist; but he betrays Faith by his Ineffectual and Probable managery of it, making it seem a sleight *Opinion* or lightly grounded *Credulity*. Especially, if he professes that all Proofs which can be produc'd in this matter, are *Possible to be False*: For, then, 'tis a plain and open Confession all his Endeavours are to no purpose; because he is to shew Faith, the Subject of his Discourse, to be what in reality it is; that is, *Impossible to be false*. Nay, since  
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Faith

*Faith* must be thus *Certain*, he manifestly destroys *Faith*, when he should defend and establish it, by professing all its Proofs or Grounds *possible to be false*.

6. It follows immediately, that unless some other *Medium* can be found, or way taken, in that Skill or Science call'd *Controversie*, which is able to show *Faith Impossible to be false*, than what is laid down in *Sure-footing*, which partly by our Adversaries confession of the Inability of theirs to reach Infallible Certainty, partly out of the nature of the Thing (as is seen *Sure-footing*, Corol. 16 and 40.) is evidently impossible; nor was it ever yet attempted by any other Means, except by looking into the nature of *Tradition*: It follows, I say, that as it is *Certain* that *Faith* and its Grounds are *Impossible to be false*, that is, *false to us*, or *may be shown* thus *Impossible to be False*: So 'tis by consequence *Certain*, likewise, that the *main* Doctrin there deliver'd will stand, whatever particular miscarriages may have happen'd in the managing it; which are to be judg'd of by the strength of my Reasons there given, and the force of my Adversaries Objections.

7. 'Tis necessarily consequent from the

the foregoing Paragraphs, that, if I have discour'd right in this small Treatise of mine, and have prov'd that Faith, and, consequently its Grounds, must be Impossible to be False; then Mr. Tillotson's Confession p. 118. (to which M. Stillingfleet's Doctrin is consonant) that [*It is Possible to be otherwise (that is, to be False) that any Book is so antient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whose name it bears, or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it*] is a clear Conviction that neither is the *Book-Rule* he maintains the True Rule of Faith, (§ 3.) nor have he and his Friends *True Faith*, (§ 4.) and, consequently, there being no other Rule owned (taking away *Private Spirit*) but *Tradition*, that *Tradition* is the *onely-true-Rule of Faith*, (§ 6.) and, so, the main of *Sure-Footing* stands yet firm; and, lastly, 'tis evinc'd, that his own Book which opposes it, opposes the *onety-true*, (because the *onely-impossible-to-be-False*) Ground of Faith: that is, he is convinc'd in that Supposition, to go about to undermine all Christian Faith: Whence the Title of his Probable-natur'd Book is manifest'd to be an improper \* Nick-name, \*Rule of Faith, and the Book it self to merit no Reply.

8. This

8. This last point is hence farther confirm'd because Mr T. (and Mr. St.) can claim no admittance into a dispute whether this or the other be the True Rule of Faith, till they approve themselves to be *Christians* and show they hold there is such a thing as *Faith*, or that it can bear *the having any Rule* at all; since an Assent to a point seen and acknowledg'd *Possible to to be False*, can never rise to be more than an *Opinion*; nor can the Motive of assenting to what may possibly be False, in true speech be call'd *The Rule of Faith*; both, because there is in that case *no Faith*, (Infer. 1.) and, so, it cannot be a Rule to what *is not*; as also, because what we see *Possible to be False*, cannot with any propriety be cal'd a Rule to the Understanding directing it to Truth, in regard, for any thing it sees, 'tis a *crooked path* and a *False Light* leading it into Error. What therefore they are to do, in the circumstances they have brought themselves into, is, to show that they destroy not the *Truth* of Faith, that is, the *Nature* of Faith it self, and the *Nature* of the *way* to that Truth or the *Rule* of Faith, by putting them both  
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possible to be False. I saw they did; and therefore was oblig'd to begin my discourse higher, and to settle the Existence of Faith by removing the possibility of it's Falshood; that, so, it might be shown able to bear the having a Rule; which, while it was in the torturing and uncertain condition to which Mr. T. and Mr. St. had reduc'd it, that is, in a Possibility of being all a Ly, and indeed is an Actuality of being as to us *not-Truth*, but at most a great *Likelihood*, it was utterly incapable of. Since therefore in the right method of discoursing *An est* ought to antecede *Quid est* they have lost their right to be discours'd with about the *Quid est* of the Rule of Faith, or *what is that Rule*, till they can justify themselves not to have destroy'd the very *An est* or Existence of Rule and Faith both, with which Mr. T. is now challeng'd from his own words, and Mr. St. from his abetting him and espousing his Patronage. Both Nature, therefore, and Art excuse me from replying to Mr. T. and Mr. St. where the just Laws of severe and rigorous Reason exactly obseru'd; and, so, 'tis onely a voluntary Courtesy

Courtesy not an obligatory duty to afford them or any other Writers thus Principled any Answer at all, or to admit them to a dispute about this Point, *what is the Rule of Faith.*

Lastly, hence is inferr'd that a Conclusive Method or short way of ending all Controversies between the Catholik Church and all her relinquishers, is settled by this Doctrin. For, if right Faith must be *Impossible to be False to us*, or to the Generality of Christians, that is, if the Motives to embrace Christianity, must be *thus firm*; then 'tis Evident that that Party whose Writers renounce the having any such Motives, in case those writers speak the sense of that Party, is not rightly *Christian* or truly *Faithfull*, \* but a *distinct Sect* from the body of right Christians: or, it being most unjust that the discourses of private Speculators should be pinn'd upon the whole party, if they write things deniable by that party; in case any such Party should think fit to disclaim such Writers as private discourses and their Tenet of Christian Faith's not being *Absolutely Certain*, which they are at liberty to do, and set some other

\* Infer. 4



other writers to maintain the opposite Thesis, it will quickly be seen whether they are able to bring *Infallible* Grounds of Faith, I mean any Authority conveying Christ's Faith down to us *infallibly* (which they must bring \* if they \*Infer. 2.) will prove Faith Impossible to be False) distinct from what the Catholick Church holds to, and which themselves renounc't when they forsook her Communion. But that there are, any such Grounds as these, that is Grounds *Inerrably* bringing down the Knowledge of Christs Faith to us, that is a, Rule of Faith *Impossible to be False to us*, I could never yet discern by the carriage, writings or Discourse of any Party that dissented from the Catholick Church, to be their Tenet : If, then, it be a most Certain Truth, that Faith must be *Impossible to be false*, as, I hope, I have abundantly concluded ; 'tis, also, most Certain, that those who deny they have *such a Faith*, do, by that very denial, confess they have no *True Faith*, nor are *truly Faithfull*, nor of the *True Catholick Church*.

Post-

*Postscript.*

**T**HUS, Reader, thou seest I still endeavour candidly to put Controversy home as far as my discourse can carry it; and that I have resum'd here all the scatter'd ends of *voluminous* disputes into *one point*. By which means the sincere Protestant, and all others out of the Church, may see at a short view what they are to do. If they look into their own breasts, as they are Professors of Christianity, they will find it writ there in Capitals, That **CHRISTIAN FAITH CANNOT BE AN ILLUSION OR FALSHOOD**; Also, that Faith is to be held by them *True*, and that they ought to suffer all Persecutions and Death it self for the  
*profes*

## Postscript.

*professing* it to be *such*: This found, and duly reflected on, the next thing to be done is, that they press their Learned men, by whom they are led, to shew them by such Grounds as their separation from the Catholick Church permits them to hold, that is, by *their* Grounds, that Christian Faith is *Impossible to be False*; If they can; (as hitherto they have told us *they cannot*) then their Adherents may in reason hope well of their own condition till they see those attempts evidently shown invalid. But, if they profess still they *cannot*; and that Faith *needs* no such Certainty; then, not onely the natural *dictamen* of Christianity in their own breasts ought to make them distrust the Principles of their Party, found to be so destructive to Christian

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Faith

## Postscript.

Faith, bnt also I shall hope there are some Proofs in this foregoing Treatise which they will judg require an Answer.

I expect my Answer<sup>s</sup> will sow together many thin Rhetorical fig-leaves to cover the Deformity of that abominable *Thesis*, that *Faith may be False*; which to propose undisguiz'd were too openly shameful: But, I hope thou wilt be able to discern their sense through their Rhetorick, and heedfully to mark with a stedfast Eye, that, in how quaint and elegant phrases soever they cloak their Tenet, yet the genuin, down-right and natural sense of the position they go about to defend, will still be this, [ *The mysteries of Christian Faith may all be so many Lies, for any thing any man living absolutely knows, and the whole*

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## Postscript.

*whole Body of Christian Doctrine a Bundle of Falshoods.*

I expect also many plausible Instances and pretended Parallels of the sufficiency of inferior degrees of Certitude for such and such particular ends. But, what thou art to consider, is, whether those Ends be Parallel or equal to that *highest End* and *Concern of Christian Faith*.

*These things I expect ; but I expect not that so much as one Principle, that will be found to deserve that name, will ever be thought ~~to be~~ prudent to be produc't to justify a Tenet every way so Irrational, and unprincipled; or rather destroying the Certainty, and consequently the Essence and Nature, of the Best Body of Principles that either Nature, or the Author of Nature and*

*Postscript.*

Grace himself ever instill'd into  
Mankind.

Lastly, I beseech thee to obtain  
for me if thou canst, that, if any  
think fit to reply to this Treatise,  
they would be perswaded to set  
aside all WITTY PREVARI-  
CATION and ELEGANT  
DROLLERY, (the two chief,  
and in a manner onely, Sticklers  
in the pretended Answer to *Sure-  
Footing*) and, beginning with  
*First Principles*, to draw thence  
*Immediate Consequences*, as I have  
constantly endeavour'd in this  
Discourse. By their attempting or  
neglecting to do this, and onely by  
*that* Test, it will be seen whether  
my *EviCTIONS* stand or fall; where-  
as from flashy wit so little is  
gain'd, that even what's solid  
suffers disgrace by such a mana-  
gery. And, I here very penitent-  
ly

### *Postscript:*

ly beg pardon of my Readers  
that I have sometimes heretofore  
spent my precious time and less-  
fruitful labour which might have  
been better employd, in pursuing  
that way of Folly. For such my  
more deliberate Thoughts now  
discover it, however the reputed  
profoundness, but, indeed, real  
shallowness of my Adversaries,  
made it at that season seem most  
convenient.

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*FINIS.*

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*Corrections of the Press.*

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